

The Star-Spangled Banner

First Sheet Music Imprint, Arranged by Thomas Carr 1814



Words by Francis Scott Key Original Music by John Stafford Smith



(C Major • High Voice)
Edited by Mark Clague and Andrew Kuster



The Star-Spangled Banner (first sheet music imprint), 1814

Lyric by Francis Scott Key (1779–1843); Music by John Stafford Smith (1750–1836) Arranged by Thomas Carr (d. 1849)

Historical Note

Usually referred to as a poet, Francis Scott Key is more accurately remembered—at least in connection with "The Star-Spangled Banner"—as a lyricist. In fact, he wrote lyrics for a total of three songs and ten hymns. In all cases, he invented words to fit previously existing musical models. This was typical in Key's era when hand-engraved music notation was expensive, but printing words was not. In one strategy known as the broadside ballad tradition, lyrics would be written to match the rhythm and contour of familiar tunes and published as text only in newspapers and books. The melodies for these "broadside ballads" were usually identified by a note just below their titles. The most successful of these lyrics went "viral" and were reprinted again and again by local newspapers.

Such was the case with Key's "In Defense of Fort McHenry" (as the lyric was originally known). It was first printed as a broadside ballad with the indication "Tune—Anacreon in Heaven." In the patriotic jubilation following Baltimore's victory, Key's lyric was reprinted widely. Carrs Music Store and music publishing house in Baltimore thus recognized a commercial opportunity when Francis Scott Key approached the firm about publishing his song with accompanying musical notation. According to Mary Jordan Carr, her father Thomas Carr created the musical arrangement "by Mr. Key's request in his presence from his manuscript selected from an English Composition—entitled "The Anacreon in Heaven" [sic]—and approved by him." 1

Thomas Carr's resulting arrangement is faithful to the 1779 imprint of "The Anacreontic Song" and this issue was likely in the Carr family collection as Joseph Carr had owned a music shop in London and brought his business to Baltimore in 1794. Thomas, who also played organ at Christ Church in Baltimore, added an original introduction and coda that would be imitated by other publishers up through the U.S. Civil War. His imprint also marks two other vital innovations.

Published in late October or November of 1814, the Carr imprint is not only the first presentation of the lyric with a notated accompaniment, it is also the first

publication of any sort to bear the title "The Star Spangled Banner." Carr's arrangement is further the first representation of the "Anacreon" melody to use a raised fourth scale degree. This half-step elevation adds momentum to the melody and emphasizes specific words in the text. For Key's first verse, the words "light," "fight" and finally "there" are stressed.

Performance Suggestions

The original version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" is a song celebrating an unexpected victory. It is thus upbeat, not a sacred hymn. The tempo is marked "with spirit" and is sung faster than is common today. While group performance is appropriate, in Key's era the Banner would have been sung by a soloist with a choir (often the audience) joining in on a repetition of the chorus (i.e., the repeating final two lines of each verse). This refrain creates a ritualized affirmation of the lyric (and also gives the soloist a short respite). Note too that the melody's contour and rhythm are different than is traditional today. Care must be taken to sing the notation as on the page. It is rather easy to accidentally sing what is habitual instead.

Sources

This edition created from one of the dozen or so surviving copies of the original Carr Music Store first imprint held in the collection of the University of Michigan at the William L. Clements Library (see plate).

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¹ Joseph Muller, *The Star Spangled Banner* (New York: G.A. Baker, 1935), p. 43–46.



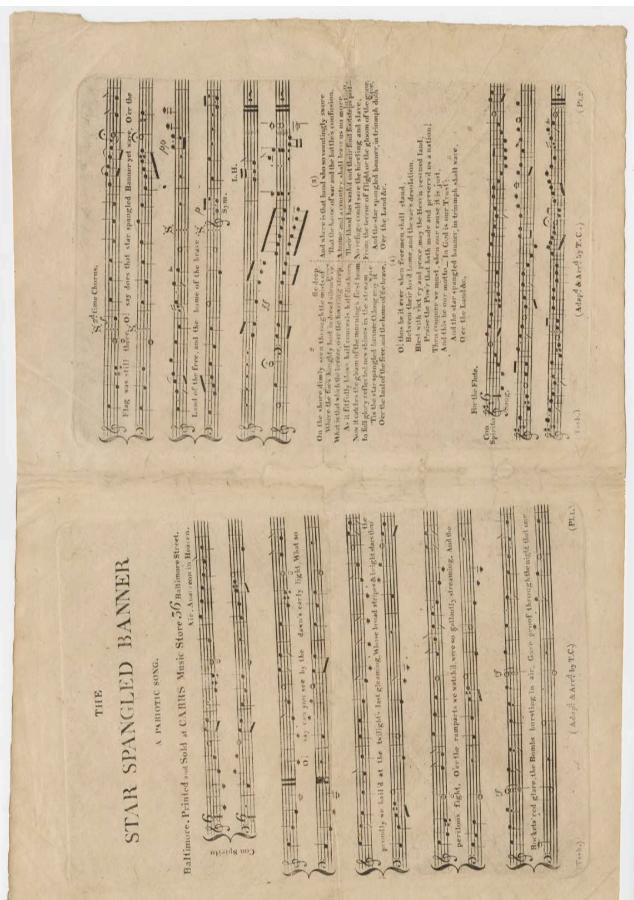


Plate: Carrs Music Store first printing of "The Star Spangled Banner," 1814; note misspelling "pariotic" in subtitle Courtesy William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor)

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