



Battle of Baltimore and The Star-Spangled Banner

The **Battle of Baltimore** (September 12–15, 1814) took place between British and American forces in the [War of 1812](#). American forces repulsed sea and land invasions off the busy port city of [Baltimore, Maryland](#), and killed the commander of the invading British forces.

The British and Americans first met at the [Battle of North Point](#).^[9] Though the Americans retreated, the battle was a successful delaying action that inflicted heavy casualties on the British, halted their advance, and allowed the defenders at Baltimore to prepare for an attack.

The resistance of Baltimore's [Fort McHenry](#) during bombardment by the Royal Navy inspired [Francis Scott Key](#) to compose the poem "Defence of Fort M'Henry", which later became the lyrics for "[The Star-Spangled Banner](#)," the national anthem of the United States.

Future U.S. president [James Buchanan](#) served as a private in the defense of Baltimore.

Star Spangled Banner

An American lawyer and amateur poet, [Francis Scott Key](#), was on a mercy mission for the release of Dr. [William Beanes](#), a prisoner of the British. Key showed the British letters from wounded British officers praising the care that they received from Dr. Beanes. The British agreed to release Beanes, but Key and Beanes were forced to stay with the British until the attack on Baltimore was over.

Key watched the proceedings from a truce ship in the [Patapsco River](#). On the morning of the 14th, Key saw the American flag waving above Fort McHenry. Inspired, he began jotting down verses on the back of a letter he was carrying. Key's poem, originally named "Defence of Fort M'Henry", was printed on pamphlets by the [Baltimore American](#).

Key's poem was later set to the tune of a British song called "[To Anacreon in Heaven](#)", the official song of the [Anacreontic Society](#), an 18th-century gentlemen's club of amateur musicians in London. The song eventually became known as "[The Star-Spangled Banner](#)". The US Congress made it the national anthem of the United States in 1931.

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