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The Story Of The Star Spangled Banner

By Daniel Goevert

The future of the young United States looked bleak as the summer of 1814 entered its final weeks.

The "Second War for American Independence", often called the "War of 1812", had taken a perilous turn for the upstart Americans. On August 19, British warships sailed up Chesapeake Bay and captured Washington D.C. in only five days. President Madison and other government officials barely escaped the city before the Redcoats set fire to the US Capitol, the White House, and numerous public buildings. As if by divine intervention, a torrential rainstorm struck just in time to save the city from total destruction.

>From Washington, the British planned a massive attack on Baltimore. Incidental to the events leading up to the assault, American physician William Beanes was taken prisoner by a British scout party. Fearing for his wellbeing, a few of the good doctor's friends sent a respected Georgetown lawyer named Francis Scott Key to negotiate his release. Once on board the British flagship, Key amiably persuaded the commanding officer to free Dr. Beanes, but because both Americans had observed preparations for the military operation against Baltimore, they were temporarily detained behind the British fleet.

At the mouth of Baltimore's harbor sat Fort McHenry. No invasion force could take the city without passing by the imposing fortification. Knowing full well the British were coming, the determined Fort McHenry defenders unfurled an exceptionally large American flag, to proudly demonstrate their resolve. Sewn from the finest wools, the 30 foot by 42 foot banner was visible for miles.

At 7 o'clock on the morning of September 13, 1814, the British naval bombardment of Fort McHenry commenced. The American garrison, personified by their enormous flag, stood ready to face the enemy. The fierce bombing continued all day, and into the night.

>From a distance, Key anxiously witnessed the battle as the evening wore on. As long as the roar of cannons filled the air, he knew Fort McHenry had not surrendered. Occasionally, the red glare of deadly rockets illuminated the night, giving visual assurance the Stars and Stripes were still flying. A few hours after midnight, the shelling suddenly stopped, followed by an eerie, uncertain silence. Key nervously paced the ship deck, agonizing over who had won the battle. Visions of defeat dampened his

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spirit. If Fort McHenry had fallen, would this spell doom for the United States? Did this mean the end of the republic's grand experiment in ordered liberty?

Peering into the darkness for what seemed like an eternity, Key searched in vain for a sign to relieve his anxiety. Finally, the first glimmer of dawn's early light revealed a joyous sight... the great Star-Spangled Banner gently blowing in the breeze... proof that Fort McHenry remained secure in American hands!

Moved by the dramatic outcome, Key quickly composed a few lines of poetry on the back of an old letter. Later, in his Baltimore hotel room, he added several more stanzas under the title "Defence of Fort M'Henry". Within a week, the poem appeared in print, and soon, newspapers from Georgia to New Hampshire were running with the verses. Eventually, the poem was accompanied by music and renamed "The Star-Spangled Banner". The song enjoyed patriotic popularity for many years, but it wasn't until March 3, 1931, that Key's inspiration was officially adopted as the national anthem of the

United States.

Daniel J. Goevert is the webmaster of US Coin Values Advisor (

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Ask Mr. D on Banner Exchange

By Bill Daugherty

Ask Mr. D on Banner Exchange by Bill Daugherty

Dear Mr. D,

I recently joined a banner exchange. This is my first venture into banner advertising and I was shocked to see my banner getting a measly .3% click-through rate.

Is this a normal ratio or do I just have a lousy banner?

Signed,

Clickless In Seattle

Dear Clickless,

Back in the good old days (three or four years ago) it was easy to get surfers to click on banners. Today that has changed dramatically, banner advertising has hit hard times.

But even in today's climate, a .3% click-through rate is extremely low. I haven't seen your banner, so I don't know if it is lousy or not. But here are some tips to follow when creating your banner.

* The text should consist of only a few words that offer a clear message.

* Choose your color scheme with great care. Make sure your text color contrast well with your background color.

* Animation is great, but don't make it too busy.

* The two most important words you can put on any banner are "Click Here."

Now for a look at banner placement strategy:

Some banner exchanges allow you to target the type of sites where your banner will appear and some do not. If your exchange doesn't offer this feature, switch to one that does.

Banner advertising may never again enjoy the strength it had in the good old days, but you can get the most out of your banner advertising by following the guidelines above.

Bill Daugherty. Do you have an advertising or marketing question you'd like to see published in this column? Send it to <mailto:MrD@epm.zzn.com> You can visit Mr. D's website at: <http://www.freeadsgalore.com>



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