

Chorus Chatter

News and Musings for Young at Heart Chorus Members

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Our National Hymn and National Motto



Most Americans know that our National Hymn, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was written by Francis Scott Key. As a Washington lawyer, he had gone to Baltimore to negotiate the release of an American civilian who was being held prisoner by the British during the War of 1812. Key and another negotiator were being held on a truce ship in Baltimore Harbor so they wouldn't disclose details of a planned 25-hour attack on Fort McHenry.

As Key witnessed the fearsome attack from the British side of the battle, he was overjoyed to see the U.S. flag still flying on the morning of September 14, 1814. All the sights and sounds of the attack, followed by the fort's and flag's survival, inspired him to write a four-stanza poem he called "Defence of Fort McHenry." Key finished the poem within a day at the Baltimore in where he was staying.

Evidence indicates that Key suggested setting his poem to music, using the melody of a song called "To Anacreon in Heaven," which had been written nearly four decades earlier by a British composer, John Stafford Smit. Although it is technically correct that this was a British drinking song, it conjures up visions of a rowdy British pub, which is an inaccurate perception.

What's not so well known is that the National Motto on our coins, "In God We Trust," is taken from the seldom-sung fourth stanza of the song: *Then conquer we must, when our cause is just And this be our motto, "In God is our Trust."*

Although the search for a suitable coinage motto began in 1861, it wasn't made official until July 20, 1956, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation establishing "In God, We Trust" as our nation's only official motto. Previously, many people falsely believed that "E Pluribus Unum" was our nation's motto, and some people still do.



Official Army Song

Although most people are familiar with the official army song, the Army adopted many official songs over the years. The familiar "U.S. Field Artillery March," written by John Phillip Souza in 1917, is the one that has survived. It's original refrain, "The Caissons Go Rolling Along, " was later updated to "The Army Goes Rolling Along."

The Army held a contest in 1948 to replace it, but no winner was selected. In 1952, they tried again, asking the music industry to submit songs. The

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winner, "The Army's Always There," lasted only four years. Many people thought it sounded too much like "I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts."

Reader's Digest

Battle Hymn Back Story

The author of the words to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, writer, lecturer, abolitionist and suffragist Julia Ward Howe, was caught in a crush of carriages returning from a military parade in Washington, D.C. Soldiers returning to their barracks marched by singing "John Brown's Body Lies a Mouldrin' in the Grave," which has the same tune as the "Battle Hymn." Her companion in the carriage said something to the effect of, "Can you not compose more ennobling words to that tune?" Although she declined at the time, the verses came to her that night, and she wrote them down. When she woke up the next morning, she remembered that she had written something but couldn't recall a single word!

Somebody "Stole" My Song

When a singer creates a new song, it sometimes takes another performer to make it a success. Here are just a few examples:

Crazy was written by Willie Nelson but didn't become famous until Patsy Cline recorded it.

I Will Always Love You is linked to Whitney Houston but was written by Dolly Parton.

Blue Suede Shoes was written by Carl Perkins but became famous only after it was recorded by Elvis Presley.

Hallelujah is a classic Leonard Cohen number that Jeff Buckley took to a higher level of recognition.

Another Opinion on the Uncertain Future

One report says the chances are that coronavirus will still be circulating through most of the coming Winter season. Even optimistic forecasts, such as one from Goldman Sachs economists, who expect the Food and Drug Administration to approve a Covid-19 vaccine by

the end of the year, don't predict enough people will be inoculated for the U.S. to achieve herd immunity until the end of next year's second quarter. This means we could be hunkered down until next Spring, but things keep changing, so keep your hopes up. We'll sing together again, and as the words of an old song go, "We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when, but I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

Howdy, Planter

If you walked up to one of the first settlers and said (in your best John Wayne imitation), "Howdy, Pilgrim," he wouldn't have responded. That's because the settlers referred to themselves as Planters to distinguish themselves from the Adventurers, those who financed the colony, according to the website www.plimoth.org. It wasn't until the early 19th century that the term Pilgrim was applied to the *Mayflower* passengers and others who arrived in Plymouth in the early 1600s.

Reader's Digest



**YOU COME FROM
DUST, YOU WILL
RETURN TO DUST.
THAT'S WHY I DON'T
DUST. IT COULD BE
SOMEONE I KNOW.**

Free Music

The website www.FreeMusicArchive.org has an extensive collection of high-quality audio music in nearly every genre—classical, country, folk, jazz, old-time, rock and more—plus artists' biographies and links to their home pages.

How to Open a Link

If you see a link to a website on this newsletter, just use **ctrl and click** to open it.