

Samuel Francis Smith wrote the lyrics to "America" in 1831[4] while a student at the Andover Theological Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts. The use of the same melody as the British royal anthem is a contrafactum which reworks this symbol of British monarchy to make a statement about American democracy.[5]

Composer Lowell Mason had requested that Smith translate or provide new lyrics for a collection of German songs, among them one written to this melody. Smith gave Mason the lyrics he had written, and the song was first performed in public on July 4, 1831,[4] at a children's Independence Day celebration at Park Street Church in Boston. The first publication of "America" was in 1832.[4]