

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

### **"In Memory of Francis Scott Key"**

Carroll County Times Article for 31 January 1993

By Jay A. Graybeal

150 years ago Americans mourned the death of Francis Scott Key. The author of the Star Spangled Banner had died at his daughter Elizabeth Howard's Baltimore home on January 11, 1843. His death was caused by pleurisy complicated by pneumonia.

Upon learning of Key's death an anonymous friend or admirer penned memorial verses under the pseudonym of "Valeria", published in the Westminster Carrolltonian on February 3, 1843:

Oh say, has it come, with "the dawn's early light,"  
What no omen foretold "at the twilight's last gleaming?"  
Yes! the soul of the minstrel has taken its flight,  
and we hallow his name whilst our tear-drops are streaming,  
For the desolate hearth, and the wail for the dead,  
To fatally tell us the poet has fled.  
and the Star-spangled Banner in sorrow shall wave,  
For the heart that has loved it, is cold in the grave.

II

On some lovely bark, in the midst of the deep,  
where the deck-watch is kept for the mate that  
"reposes,"  
what is that soft music that mingles with sleep,  
and the solace of night's weary guardian "discloses?"  
Now it mellowly floats an the breath of the gale-  
Now swells like the tempest that shatters the sail?  
"Tis the Star-spangled Banner that's snug on the wave  
Wilst the minstrel lies low in the sleep of the grave.

III

And the soldier, whose home is the tent-covered field,  
who glories in war, and the patriots promotion,  
Would gladly emblazon on victory's shield,  
The name that each freeman must hear with emotion;  
And the song that is dear to the patriots ear,  
'mid the terrors of battle, the hours of care,  
Is the Star-spangled Banner, which proudly we sung,  
whilst the harp of the poet with cypress was hung.

IV

But, oh! my he find on the heavenly shore,  
Where the pure see their God, and feel no condemnation,  
That sorrow, and sickness, and sighing are oe'r;  
and that angles shall lead to a blest habitation,

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"For triumph he must, if his life has been just,  
And if thro' its journey in God was his trust"  
Whilst the Star-spangled Banner in mourning shall wave,  
And the tear of the patriot shall fall on his grave.

The several verses by "Valeria" are typical of early Victorian mourning poetry. The popularity of Key's Star Spanled Banner is clearly evident in 1843, however, the song would not become the National Anthem until 1931.

Photo Caption: Francis Scott Key (1779-1843) born at Terra Rubra near Keysville, Md.