



The Story of America's Star-Spangled Banner

★ by Margot Morrell ★

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For James and Naeyl

*May the love of freedom flourish
throughout your lifetimes.*

Long ago, America's flag looked very different

Our flag was not always red, white, and blue with stars and stripes!



Grand Union Flag

(British Union Jack in the corner)



Pine Tree Flag

(A symbol of freedom)



Gadsden Flag

("Don't Tread on Me")



George Washington's Flag

(13 six-pointed stars)



In 1754, a smart man named Benjamin Franklin drew a funny cartoon. It showed the American colonies looking like a big snake.



**He chose a rattlesnake because it is
wise, careful, and brave.**



**He wanted the colonies to
work together and become strong.**



Years later, during the American Revolution,
a general named **Christopher Gadsden**
put Benjamin Franklin's snake on a flag for the **Army and Navy**.



Flags help soldiers and sailors know
who is a friend and who is not.

In **1775**, George Washington's helper,
Joseph Reed, made a flag with a **pine tree** on it for ships.



That **pine-tree design** is still used in **Massachusetts** on boat flags today.
The pine tree has been a special symbol of **New England** for more than **400 years**.



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George Washington
also had his **own flag**
outside his tent.
It had **13 white** stars
on a **blue background**
so **everyone** could find him easily.



America's very first official flag
was called the

Grand Union Flag

(or Continental Colors).

It had the
British Union Jack
in the corner
to show the colonies were
still loyal to Britain.



On July 4, 1776,

America decided it wanted to be free
from Great Britain.

Everyone agreed!

The Declaration
of Independence

July 4, 1776

★ A NEW NATION
BEGINS! ★

★ So now, America ★
needed its own flag!

Congress announced a
new flag with alternating
red and white stripes,
and 13 white stars on a
blue background that looked
like a new group of stars in the sky.



In 1794, when Vermont and Kentucky joined the country, President George Washington signed a law that added two more stars and two more stripes. That was the only time stripes were ever added!

ORIGINAL 13-STAR,
13-STRIPE FLAG

NEW 15-STAR,
15-STRIPE FLAG

AN ACT
TO ADD TWO MORE
STARS AND TWO MORE
STRIPE TO THE
FLAG OF THE
UNITED STATES

GROWING TOGETHER ★ STRONGER TOGETHER
ONE NATION... MORE STARS... MORE STRIPES! ★

VERMONT

KENTUCKY

In **1812**, war broke out again between
America and **Great Britain**



Two Nations. One Ocean.



AMERICA



GREAT
BRITAIN



★
In 1813, Major George Armistead
was put in charge of Fort McHenry
in **Baltimore, Maryland.**

He wanted a huge flag to fly over the fort
so the British could see it from far away.

★



★
FORT McHENRY
★ **BALTIMORE, MARYLAND** ★

He asked a

talented seamstress

★ named ★

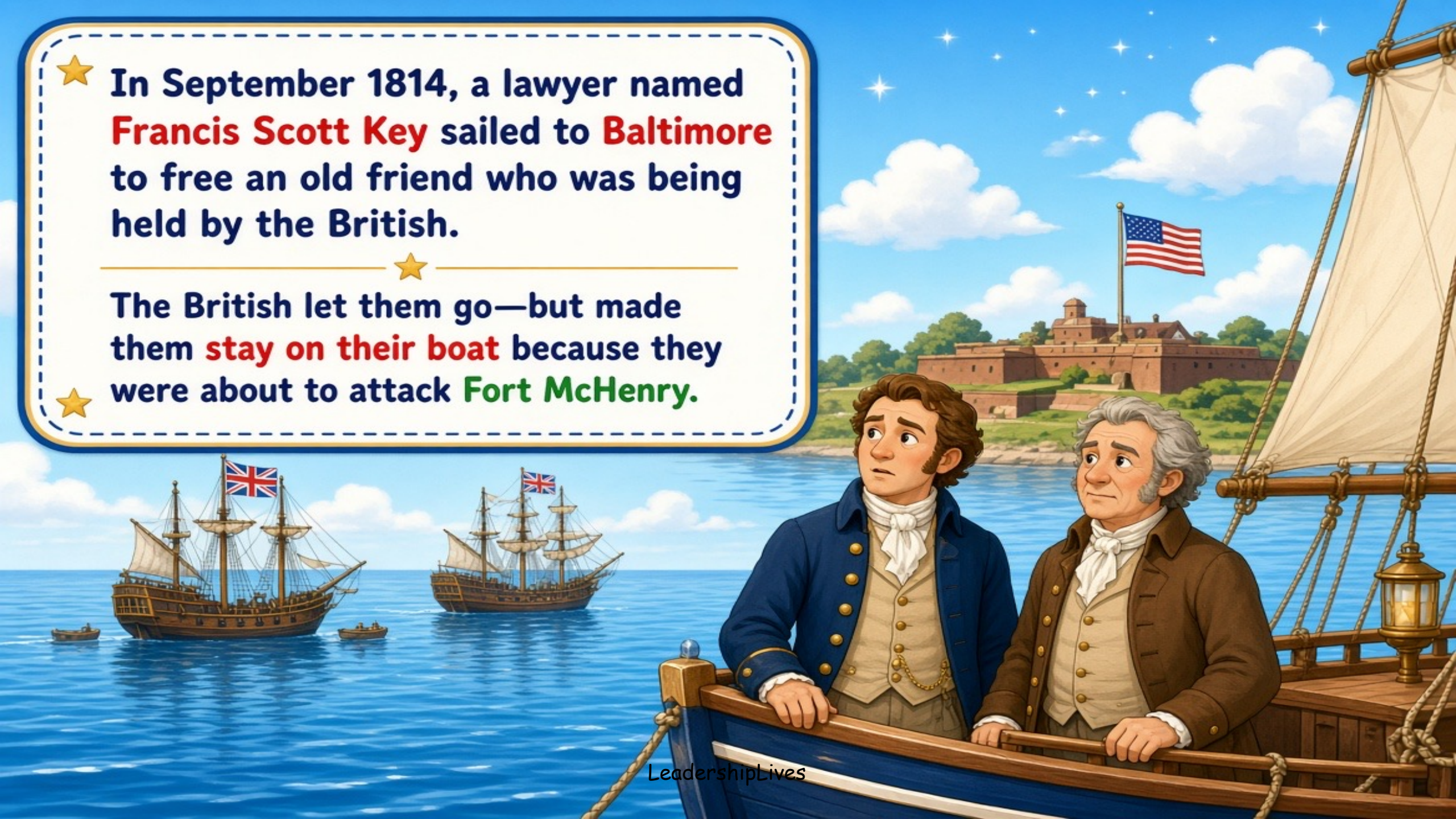
Mary Young Pickersgill

It took her and her helpers
more than a month to finish
the giant flag!



★ In September 1814, a lawyer named **Francis Scott Key** sailed to **Baltimore** to free an old friend who was being held by the British.

★ The British let them go—but made them **stay on their boat** because they were about to attack **Fort McHenry**.



For twenty-four
hours,
Francis Scott Key
watched as the
British fired
rockets and bombs
at Fort McHenry.





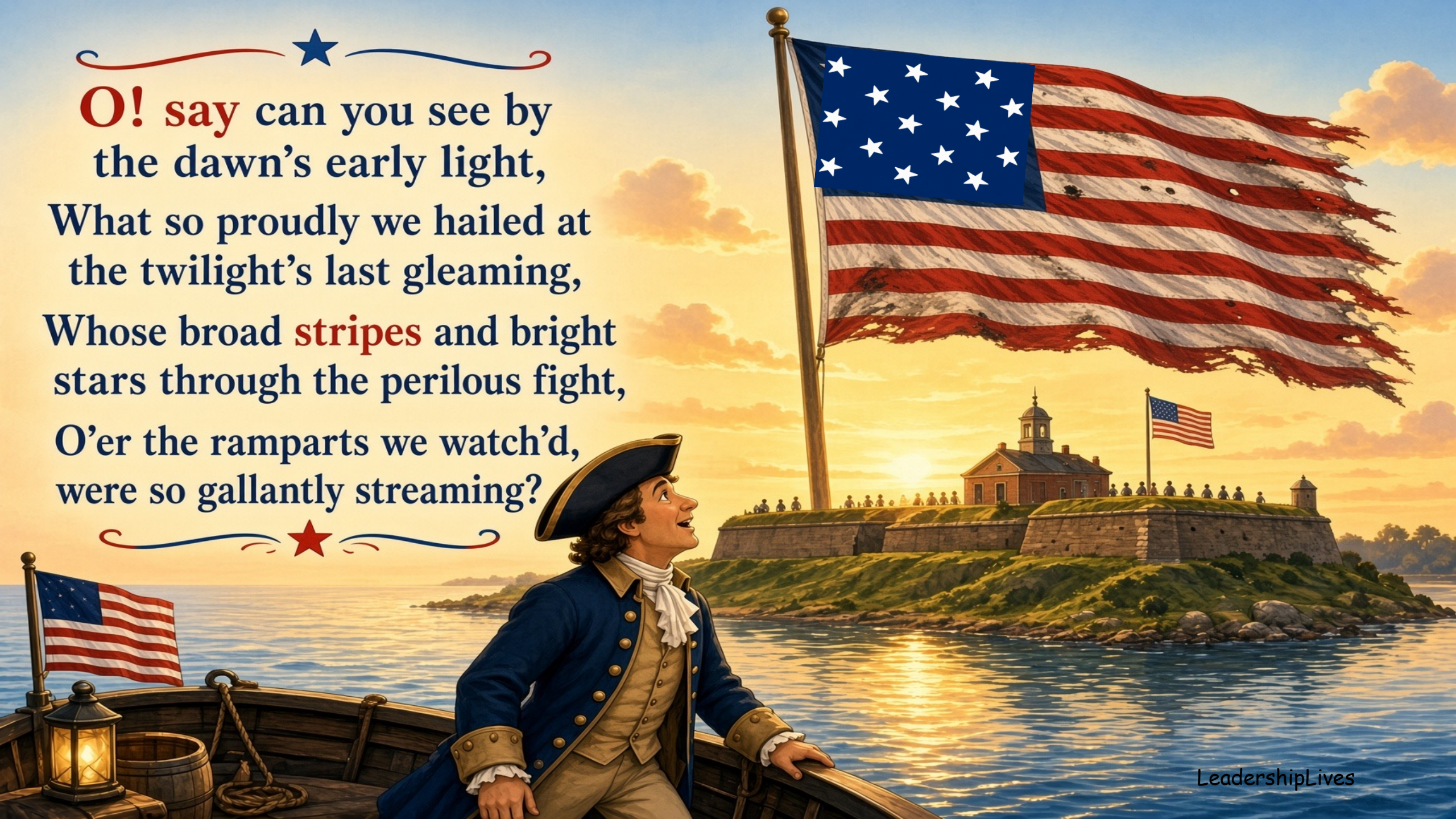
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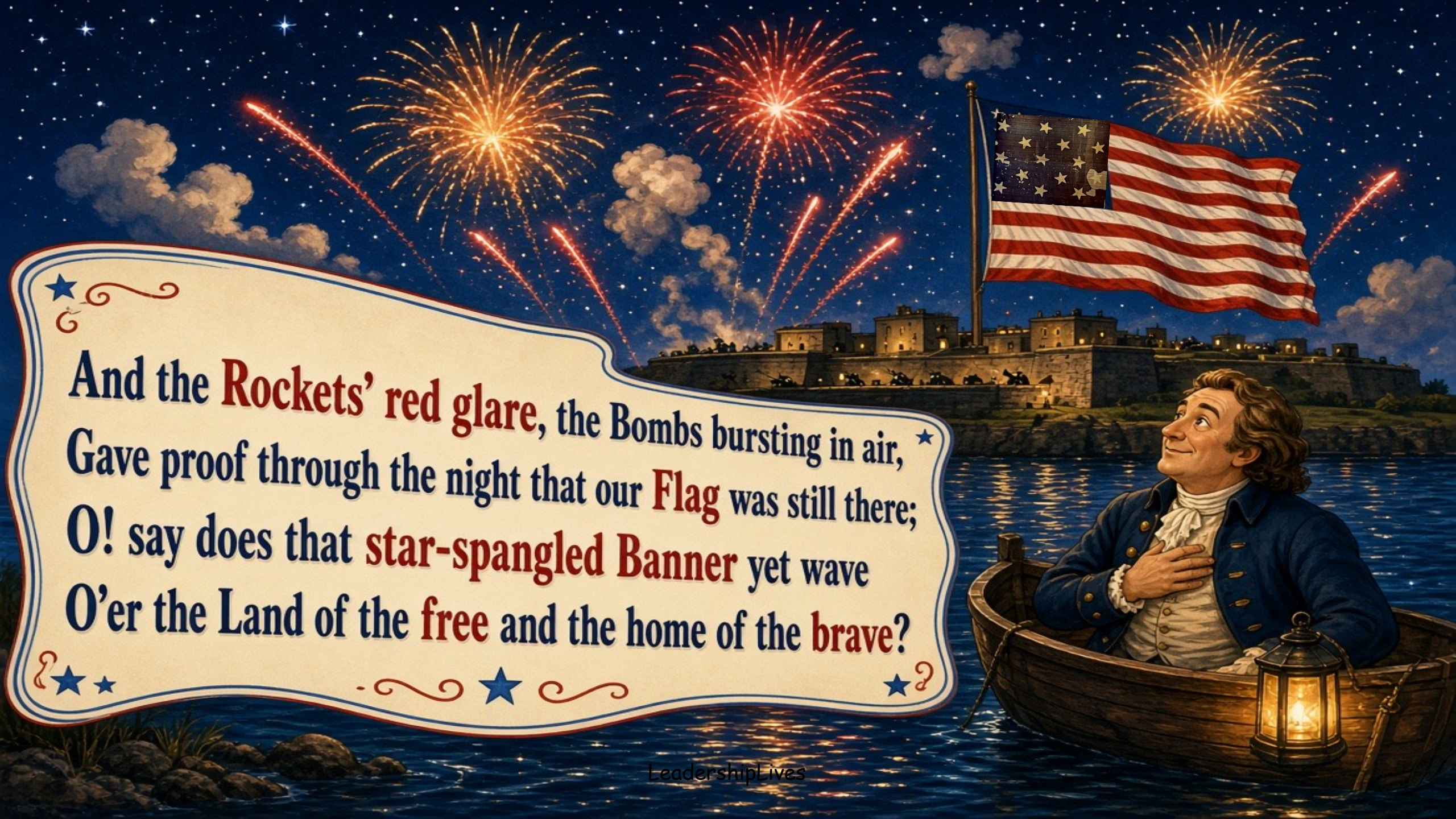
When the sun came up the next morning,
he saw the big flag still waving proudly in the wind.
★ America had not given up! ★

He grabbed an envelope from his pocket
and quickly wrote a poem: ★



O! say can you see by
the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at
the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad **stripes** and bright
stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd,
were so gallantly streaming?



A patriotic illustration featuring a man with curly brown hair, wearing a blue jacket over a white shirt with a ruffled collar, sitting in a wooden boat on a body of water. He is looking up at a night sky filled with fireworks. In the background, a large American flag with 13 stars flies from a tall pole on a hill. Below the flag is a stone fort with several buildings and cannons. The scene is set at night with a dark blue sky, white clouds, and a starry background. The water in the foreground is dark blue with some rocks visible on the left.

And the **Rockets'** red glare, the Bombs bursting in air, ★
Gave proof through the night that our **Flag** was still there;
O! say does that **star-spangled Banner** yet wave
O'er the Land of the **free** and the home of the **brave**? ★





Within just a few days,
people put the poem
to a popular tune.

★ Soon kids and grown-ups from Georgia
all the way to Maine were singing
The Star-Spangled Banner! ★

🌸 GEORGIA

ALL THE WAY TO

🌲 MAINE

**In 1912, Major
Armistead's grandson
gave the giant flag
to the Smithsonian Institution.**

You can visit the
Star-Spangled Banner
today at the
National Museum of American History
in Washington, D.C.



★ 1912 ★
A GIFT TO THE NATION

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER
★ Preserved for America's Future ★

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

SMITHSONIAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY





The End