In moments of great national crisis often times flags are flown to show support and solidarity for any particular cause.

In the case of the five terrorist attacks that occurred in France on 7–9 January 2015, the spontaneous outpouring of support for the victims and for freedom of expression was not confined to France alone, but rather overnight became a celebrated cause and an international movement. On 7 January 2015, the offices of French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo were viciously assaulted by two gun-wielding terrorists sparking a series of attacks and hostage situations resulting in a total of 20 deaths and 22 injured over the next two days. As stated by the gunmen and various sources, the primary motivation for the attack on Charlie Hebdo was the magazine’s previously published satirical cartoons of Islamic leaders. Four days later, 2 million people and 40 world leaders rallied in Paris at the Place de la République prominently displaying many national flags and the slogan “Je suis Charlie” (“I am Charlie”). For students of vexillology, this cultural moment could be considered a “vexillological event.” “Je suis Charlie” became a rallying cry adorning signs, flags, and banners, and dominating social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook. The power and impact of this messaging is a great example of how the most virally successful memes are inspired by deeply held passions. Symbols and messaging on flags, in general, are similarly displayed with intense emotion and affection for what they represent.

“Je suis Charlie” continues on page 4
NAVA’s Big Tent

Members have appropriately described the North American Vexillogical Association (NAVA) as a big tent, and personally I like the imagery. I envision a large marquee tent with a tall main tent pole surrounded by auxiliary poles that unite to support the tent while stretching the canvas tight, thus enlarging the capacity. NAVA’s main tent pole is necessarily scholarship since the Association was formed to advance the scholarly study of flags. NAVA’s filings as a nonprofit corporation declares its purpose is to “promote vexillology, as conceived by Dr. Whitney Smith, as the scientific study of flags.” However, the wording of the document continues, “bringing into closer cooperation any and all persons interested in any and all aspects of flags.” The Articles of Incorporation, which may be found on NAVA’s website, make it clear that while the Association’s central purpose is scholarship, all who have an interest in flags are equally invited and welcome.

In reality, the marvelous diversity of NAVA’s membership is its strength. NAVA’s members make up a very diverse group with equally diverse interests in flags.

Geographically, NAVA has at least one member residing on every inhabited continent to add to its diversity. NAVA’s annual meetings not only attract participants from the U.S. and Canada but draw attendees from around the world. The last several annual meetings have included attendees not only from the Americas but also from Africa, Asia and Australia. When FIAV hosts an International Flag Congress together with a NAVA annual meeting, even greater international participation occurs.

In 1981 FIAV and NAVA met together for NAVA’s 15th Annual Meeting and the 7th International Congress of Vexillology in Ottawa. Sixty individuals from sixteen nations gathered in Canada’s national capital over four days. However, one man attended under rather unusual circumstances. Professor V.A. Sokolov traveled from the Soviet Union to Ottawa, and although the Cold War would prove to be in its last decade, the restrictions on Soviet citizens traveling to the West were still evident. While attendees stayed at a downtown Ottawa hotel, Sokolov had to be returned to Soviet control each night at the USSR’s embassy a couple of miles distant from the hotel.

Although he spoke no English and I spoke no Russian, I made every attempt to be friendly. Since I wore my dress blue military uniform to a few ICV functions, Professor Sokolov must have been aware that I was a U.S. Army officer. I wanted him to see me not an opponent in the geopolitical struggle but as a fellow vexillologist and friend.

At the banquet, Professor Sokolov and I both stood to toast the Queen of Canada. On the bus returning to the hotel, I removed one of the insignia pins from the lapel of my uniform and

President’s Column continues on page 5
What Does Its Chosen Banner Say About ISIS?

(This interview with NAVA spokesperson Ted Kaye was featured on “All Things Considered” on NPR on November 22, 2014. Re-printing courtesy of NPR)

The so-called Islamic State is known for its social media savvy, but they also use more traditional propaganda: a flag. Tess Vigeland talks with vexillologist Ted Kaye about its design and history.

TESS VIGELAND, HOST: The so-called Islamic State or ISIS is known for its social media savvy. But the pictures and videos you see online feature a much more traditional propaganda technique—the group’s flag.

TED KAYE: The flag is black with white charges, representing the Shahada, the Islamic statement of faith. Large letters across the top in an archaic Arabic script give the first part of the Shahada—there is no God but Allah. And in the center is a circular disk in white and on it are three words in black—God, messenger, Muhammad—from the second part of the Shahada.

VIGELAND: Ted Kaye is a vexillologist, a person who studies flags. And he coined some basic principles of flag design. I asked how the ISIS flag shapes up.

KAYE: The first and most important principle of flag design is that the flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory because flags flap, flags drape, flags must be seen from a distance and from their opposite side. Under these circumstances, only simple flags are effective. The ISIS flag is not simple. It has writing on it that's rather complex. However, the overall design is indeed simple. It is recognizable from a distance. It's easily made, and yes, a child could draw that flag from memory.

VIGELAND: Another rule that you outline is to use meaningful symbolism. So what does the ISIS flag tell us about how that organization is trying to portray itself to the world at large?

KAYE: In this case, the most important symbolism is two things - one, the black of the flag itself, which is Muhammad's banner. It's very unusual to see a black flag in the world. But the black flag of Muhammad is what's being called up by this flag of the Islamic State. And the other important symbol is the image of the seal of Muhammad. Sometimes the white disk in the center of the flag has an irregular border, making it look more authentic like the original seal.

The so-called Islamic State has a flag. This flag has black with white charges, representing the Shahada, the Islamic statement of faith. Large letters across the top in an archaic Arabic script give the first part of the Shahada—there is no God but Allah. And in the center is a circular disk in white and on it are three words in black—God, messenger, Muhammad—from the second part of the Shahada.

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Editorial Musings

Byron DeLear

The cover story of this issue of NAVA News deals with what some consider to be an extremely “politically charged” topic. But it is precisely the emotional and cultural impact of the events surrounding the Charlie Hebdo attacks that make them so relevant to our field of study. The liberal use of flags, signs, banners, and slogans all competing for airtime during these marches and rallies made them at that moment the most widely-seen vexillological devices in the world. As scholars, it’s important to analyze these uses in as neutral a manner as possible; and as students of vexillology, no matter what cultural system we belong to, we need to be reflexively aware of our own enculturation and possible biases, and always work to not let them interfere with a deeper understanding of the true dynamics of human interactions using flags and symbols around us. But there is one aspect of these events that I feel is important to emphasize insofar as it relates to our ability to even discuss these things at all.

The free flow of information and ideas are the lifeblood of good scholarship, whether for vexillology or any social science. Academic freedom in the pursuit of knowledge is underpinned by free speech—it is a practice that propels progress and the advancement of human knowledge. Seeing fellow editor-in-chief, Stephane Charbonnier (known as “Charb”) gunned down because of the content of his magazine shook me and many to the core. Although some time has passed since those tragic terrorist attacks in France, I think it’s important to emphasize and reflect on the social value of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo most certainly plays in a world of scathing satire and criticism lampooning religions, religious figures, and politicians alike. Certainly, some consider Charlie Hebdo’s brand of satire offensive to the point of going beyond journalistic norms. But leaving this aside for a moment, as editor-in-chief of NAVA News, I think it’s important to vocally support freedom, and the free exchange of ideas and information—something we in North America
Following the outpouring of international support for the victims of Charlie Hebdo and for freedom of the press, there were numerous demonstrations opposing the irreverent, and some would say, offensive satire that the French magazine is known to produce. Anti-Charlie Hebdo rallies were held in Pakistan, Somalia, Niger, Algeria, Mali, and other majority-Muslim communities and nations. As is often the case in modern media campaigns, the slogan “Je suis Charlie” was expropriated in support of Islam and re-stated as “Je suis Muslim,” with an additional message expressing love for the Prophet Muhammad. Numerous national flags were burned at these protests including those of France, Israel, and the United States. Sadly, due to rioting, many of these demonstrations turned deadly with more than ten people losing their lives and several churches and other buildings burned to the ground.

As vexillologists, we may harbor deep personal feelings about these events, but in order to better understand the use of messaging and how flags, banners, and signs help propel those messages, we must momentarily put aside our personal...
predilections or patriotic impulses. The “Je suis Charlie” events and following protests in opposition are particularly personal if only because the messages “Je suis Charlie” and “Je suis Muslim” were framed as subjective statements—it doesn’t get any more personal. Which only underscores the fact that this emotional intensity centered around symbols and their meaning is one reason why vexillology and its impact as a social science is so important.

President’s Column continued from page 2

presented it to my Russian friend. The emblem of the Adjutant General Corps of the U.S. Army, the lapel pin, displayed a shield with the stars and stripes depicted in color. As Dr. Sokolov stared at the tiny shield he held in his palm, I thought that I saw concern in his eyes. Could he smuggle this emblem of “western imperialism” past Soviet customs guards? He gave me a quizzical look, which I returned with a broad smile.

We will meet again in Ottawa this October, and I look forward to meeting our 49th Annual Meeting’s attendees. I would have missed some of my greatest memories had I not attended NAVA 15 in Ottawa, and I am positive NAVA 49 in Ottawa will be just as memorable. Make your plans to attend. You will only be sorry if you miss it.

Editorial Musings continued from page 3

sometimes take for granted. Freedom of speech and the press are bulwarks upon which our culture relies. NAVA, as a scholarly organization devoted to vexillology, the study of flags, is greatly augmented by an environment free of censorship. Our ability to freely express ourselves is not only the lifeblood of democracy—the mainstream political system in both the United States and Canada—but for our academic institutions as well.

For us to succeed as students of vexillology, or seekers of knowledge and understanding on any level, we need the academic freedom to ask the hard questions and the freedom to share our work. We need to be able to delve deeply into what motivations drive political movements and how flags, signs, and sloganeering accompany those motivating factors: “Why do people fight and die carrying flags?” Finally, we need the courage to support and defend those academic freedoms whenever they are brought into question.
Hotel
NAVA 49 will be held 16–18 October 2015 at the Ottawa Marriott Hotel, 100 Kent Street, Ottawa. Located downtown close to Parliament Hill, this is a great location and, along with its fine facilities, make the Marriott an excellent choice for our annual meeting.

Ottawa Marriott Hotel Rates
Accommodations have been arranged at the rate of C$149 per night for single or double occupancy (with free Wi-Fi in each room) during the period 14–20 October for reservations made until 22 September 2015. You may make your reservation by either calling 1-800-853-8463 and asking for the NAVA rate or online at the Ottawa Marriott Hotel NAVA 49 reservation page. Please make your reservation using the NAVA group rate as it helps pay for the cost of the meeting rooms. Anyone looking to share a hotel room should contact meeting host Ken Reynolds at nava49@nava.org as he will maintain a list of those looking to share a room.

Registration Information
Registration for NAVA 49 is through the Philosophy Documentation Center, which also processes the Association's membership applications and renewals. Click here to register. Onsite registration will be available, but because it makes planning difficult, please register online if at all possible. The last day for online registration is October 8.

At the time of registration, attendees will be asked if they intend to participate in the Saturday and Sunday morning breakfasts. These meals are provided as part of the regular, student, and companion registrations; however, in order to reduce expenses for uneaten meals, NAVA needs to provide an accurate number to the hotel catering staff.

NAVA 49 Registration Fees:
Individual (includes Whitney Smith Dinner)
- Through August 4—US$175
- August 5 to September 15—US$200
- Beginning September 15—US$250

First-time attendee registration (includes Whitney Smith Dinner)
- Through August 4—US$150
- August 5 to September 15—US$175
- Beginning September 15—US$225

Student (active member enrolled full-time in a degree program at an institution of higher education; includes Whitney Smith Dinner)—US$100
Whitney Smith Dinner only (Saturday)—US$65
Supporter (annual-meeting flag and printed materials only)—US$25
First exhibit table (before October 8; non-commercial or organizational members)—free
First exhibit table (before October 8; commercial exhibitors that are not organizational members)—US$10
Second exhibit table (before October 8)—US$10

NAVA 49 Call for Papers
If you wish to make a proposal for a presentation, or conduct a symposium or workshop at NAVA 49, please direct all abstracts, completed papers, other submissions, and questions to: Annie Platoff FF, 103 Kalley Dr., Goleta CA USA, Work telephone: (805) 893-2074, e-mail: annie.nava@platoff.net

Travel Requirements (Including Passports)
Attendees who are not Canadian residents will likely require passports to enter Canada and return home. The general requirements for adult U.S. citizens are simple: (1) a U.S. passport or NEXUS card if you are traveling to Canada by air or (2) a U.S. passport card, U.S. passport, or NEXUS card if you are traveling from the U.S. to Canada via land or sea borders. U.S. citizens do not need a visa to travel to Canada.

Details on eligibility to enter Canada as a tourist—including young children of adult U.S. citizens and visa requirements for citizens of countries other than the U.S.—are available online. While all attendees are responsible for determining both the Canadian and their own country's travel requirements, contact meeting host Ken Reynolds at nava49@nava.org if you need assistance with a letter of invitation or similar concerns.

For most attendees from outside Canada, traveling to NAVA 49 only means you need a passport. If you do not have a current passport, then be sure and apply for one now!

For full details about NAVA 49 please visit the annual meeting page on the NAVA website.

NAVA 49 Flag Description
The NAVA 49 flag was designed by Reid Reynolds and her father, Ken Reynolds Ph.D., with input from John Hartvigsen, Pete Loser, and Jeremy Hammond. Although a simple and minimal design, the flag covers a lot of contextual ground. First, the flag is restricted to red and white—the national colours of Canada. In this instance, the white field also signifies snow and winter, the latter being the predominant season for most of the country (and the reason why NAVA 49 could not be held in Ottawa in February 2015 for fear of freezing most of the attendees—it was -32 degrees Fahrenheit on February 15, the fiftieth anniversary of the Canadian flag). The silhouette next to the hoist depicts the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, the well-known building that most represents Ottawa to the country and the world. The maple leaf in the upper fly represents the nation as a whole and Canada’s most well-known symbol. The flag’s proportions are 1:2.
Is This the Brigantine *Kaʻahumanu*?

By Patrick Kaʻanoʻi

This paper responds to an article on the blog of the pro-Hawaiian sovereignty organization “Hawaiian Kingdom.” The article shows how the Hawaiian “flag with the Union Jack existed before” its standardization on May 24, 1845. One piece of evidence offered is an image (Fig. 1) identified as the brig *Kaʻahumanu*, “the Hawaiian ship commanded by Captain Alexander Adams,” “sometime after 1819.” However, flag colleagues have noted some historical inconsistencies in the image and its description, and have brought it to my attention for review.

This paper is written to answer these questions: “Is the image actually that of Alexander Adams’ brig *Kaʻahumanu*? And if not, what is her identity and is there a color version of this image?”

What follows are my answers to these questions along with supporting historical evidence that includes additional contributing information regarding the original image, color, and design of the Hawaiian flag of 1816. I find the image to be of another ship, the *Kamehameha III*, likely from soon after 1845.

The Hawaiian Kingdom web blog describes the above image as:

“a flagship that has both the national flag and the royal flag. The royal flag, also called the royal ensign, is a flag that signals the presence of the Hawaiian monarch and in this portrait it signaled the presence of Kamehameha II on board. The royal ensign also flies at the residence of the Hawaiian monarch and wherever the monarch travels.”

The brig *Kaʻahumanu* was originally owned by John Jacob Astor (1763–1848) and named the *Forester*. The ship was sold to King Kamehameha I (1756–1819) on April 6, 1816, with the condition that Alexander Adams (1780–1871) would command it, which he did.

The ship in Fig. 1 does have both the National Hawaiian Flag aft and the Royal Standard aloft. However, because we know that the Royal Standard was not established until May 24, 1845 (along with the Royal Crest that serves as its charge), the image could not date from circa 1817 when the *Kaʻahumanu* set sail for Canton, China, or soon thereafter. In a description of that voyage, “Two fine vessels bore the national flag, which had been adopted shortly before; they displayed the English union, with seven alternated red, white and blue stripes, emblematic of the principal islands. One was a ship, newly purchased, destined for China, with a cargo of sandal-wood, and the other a war-brig, the *Kaʻahumanu*, of eighteen guns, commanded by an Englishman, of the name of Adams.”

Furthermore, the Hawaiian Flag depicted, shown here in gray scale, has eight stripes (alternating white, red, and blue).

So the description of the image on the blog is in error. The confusion between the ships may stem from the fact that Adams commanded the first ship and drew a watercolor of the second ship. The image should instead be captioned:

“Aleander Adams’ watercolor of a vessel, probably the king’s yacht *Kamehameha III*, flying the royal standard, ca. 1845–49. Source: Douglas V. Askman, Royal Standards of the Kingdom of Hawaii.”

And with the corrected date, the image no longer helps demonstrate pre-1845 use of the Hawaiian Flag design.
The key supporting information derives from a paper by Douglas V. Askman entitled: *Royal Standards of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, 1837–1893*. In this excerpt, he says:

“A black and white image of the drawing made by Adams of the royal standard is in the collection of the Hawai‘i State Archives. Although undated, the image is certainly from the time of the Kamehameha dynasty as Adams died in 1871 during the reign of Kamehameha V (r. 1863–1872). Moreover, the illustration is probably from the time of Kamehameha III, most likely, in fact, within a few years of the adoption of the 1845 Hawaiian royal standard. Adams’ drawing shows the King’s flag flying from a ship. According to Victor S. K. Houston, who served as Hawai‘i’s territorial delegate to the United States Congress from 1927 to 1933, the vessel from which the King’s standard is hoisted in Adams’ illustration is the Hawaiian royal yacht, *Kamehameha III*. Houston bases his claim on another illustration in Adams’ journal in which the author has painted a ship and labeled it the *Kamehameha III*. This yacht is very similar in appearance to Adams’ water-color of the vessel displaying the royal standard. If Houston’s assertion is correct, Adams’ illustration of the royal standard was probably drawn within a few years of the 1845 adoption of the King’s banner. This is because the royal yacht *Kamehameha III*, which arrived in Hawai‘i from Boston in 1846, was seized by the French navy in 1849 and sailed to Tahiti during a conflict between France and the Hawaiian Kingdom. Adams’ drawing of the Hawaiian royal standard depicts a background of eight stripes of alternating colors. Placed on this in the center of the flag is the Kingdom’s coat of arms set on a white square.

Finally, physical evidence attesting to the design of the 1845 Kamehameha royal standard can be found in the surviving royal standards from the subsequent Kalākaua dynasty. These royal flags feature the eight alternating white, red, and blue stripes of the Hawaiian national flag without the Union Jack in the upper-left corner. In the center of the design on a white square is a simplified version of the Kingdom’s coat of arms used during the Kalākaua dynasty. This heraldic device is based on the design proposed by Ha‘alilio and Richards. Thus, the royal banners from the late nineteenth century fit the basic description given by Wyllie in 1845 and closely resemble the illustration done by Adams probably during the reign of Kamehameha III. Therefore, the 1845 emblem almost certainly had the same basic appearance as the Kalākaua-era standard.”

During the French siege of the town of Honolulu between August 22 and September 5, 1849, the yacht *Kamehameha III* was confiscated and sailed to Tahiti, never to return. “The King’s yacht, *Kamehameha III*, captured and carried off by the naval forces of France, under the command of Rear Admiral de Tromelin, arrived at Papiete on the 9th of October. She had been stripped, and was to be re-coppered.”

All of this is not to counter the assertion that versions of the Hawaiian Flag existed well before 1845. However, another image would better serve the blog’s purpose, such as the more poignant image of a Hawaiian Flag (Fig. 2), similar to the one that was standardized by the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in 1845, which was published in a collection of art by Louis Choris entitled:

That image was researched and presented as part of a paper by Patrick Ka'ano'i at the 47th Annual Meeting of NAVA, October 2013, Salt Lake City, Utah, entitled, “The Hawaiian Flag Has Always Been White, Red, and Blue.”

CONCLUSION

The image purportedly of the brig *Ka'a'ahumanu* (Fig 1), as identified in the online Hawaiian Kingdom blog, actually depicts not the brig *Ka'a'ahumanu* circa 1819, but most likely the royal yacht *Kamehameha III* after 1845—a ship which was confiscated by the French in 1849 and sent to Tahiti and never seen again. The original watercolor image by Alexander Adams is in the collections of the Hawaii State Archives.

NOTES

7. Louis Choris's *Port d'Hanarourou* (1816).
8. Ibid.
Star-Spangled Banner Spectacular: Celebrating 200 Years

By Dale Grimes

Attending Fort Howard Elementary School for six years in the 1960s, we students were well aware of our local history. We could look out the front windows of our classrooms and see Old North Point Road and know this was the road the British Army marched on to attack the City of Baltimore and it was the road they retreated on to get back onto their ships after their attack failed!

On September 6 & 7, 2014, the Dundalk Patapsco Neck Historical Society and Museum Inc. sponsored the Defenders Day event held at Fort Howard Park at the site of the British landing. It was a two-day event and because it was the 200th anniversary of the Battle of North Point (September 12, 1814) and the bombardment of Fort McHenry (September 13 & 14, 1814) we wanted to pull out all the stops!

I volunteered to put up a flag display at the event to honor the 24 Americans killed at the Battle of North Point. First I picked a location that measured 30’ by 42’ that could accommodate an adjacent tent that measured 10’ by 20’, a hanging Star-Spangled Banner Flag of 10’ by 19’, a hanging British flag 15’ by 25’ and the Star Spangled Banner Barrel. Let me discuss each in turn.

The 30’ by 42’ rectangle had 28 flags, each 4’ by 6’ with 15 stars and 15 stripes spaced around its perimeter, representing the dimensions of the Star-Spangled Banner that flew over Fort McHenry on the morning of September 14, 1814. (Photo #1) The flags were on 10’ poles and were spaced 7’ apart along the fly and 6’ apart along the hoist. I looped a white rope from pole to pole leaving an opening at the front entrance and an opening to the tent in the back. (I have found that even when I laid the rope on the ground at the entrance, people were reluctant to step over the rope to come into the display.) After people left the tent, I explained to them the roped off area represented the dimensions of the Star-Spangled Banner that flew over Fort McHenry on the morning of September 14, 1814. (Photo #1) The tent had six 6’ panels giving an overview of The War of 1812 (Photo #2). On display (from my personal collection) was a cannon ball and a saber from the Battle of North Point and a December 9, 1814 newspaper account from The Weekly Messenger—Boston. Also on display were items from the 1914 Baltimore Centennial of the “Battle of Baltimore.” The newspaper account was from the London Gazette Extraordinary, dated October 17, 1814. The focus of the very long article was that the British Army and Navy may have failed in the attack on the City of Baltimore, but they accomplished what they had set out to do—scare the citizens of Baltimore.

wide and the bolts of material were only 18 wide, etc. People were very impressed with size of the Star-Spangled Banner and could better appreciate the effort that went into making it when they were standing in the 30’ by 42’ area.
Next I picked two trees about 30’ apart to display the Star-Spangled Banner (Photo #3). I bolted a chain around one tree 12’ from the ground and did the same with the second tree. I attached a steel cable to the first chain and a come-a-long to the second chain and tighten up the cable, making sure the cable looked level to the ground. I then attached the flag to the cable using 50 to 60 clips. It was a challenge to display a flag across the fly when most flags are meant to fly attached to the hoist.

The British flag was particularly challenging because of its size (Photo #4). The cable was 40’ long and 26’ up in the trees. I knew there is a proper way to display the British flag, but I couldn’t remember what it was. With the event opening the next day, I thought I would go ahead and put the flag up anyway. I knew I had a 50-50 shot of getting it right and anyway, who would know if it was displayed wrong. I climbed down the ladder and stood admiring my work when I heard someone behind me say “I hate to tell you this, but...” There were two men standing there and I said “Go ahead and tell me”. They told me the British flag was wrong. I asked “Do I have to turn it upside down to fix it?” They said “No just switch ends left to right.” I asked them how they knew the flag was wrong. They said they were from Canada and had come to the event to portray the British in the reenactment of the Battle of North Point and that they had served in the British Army!

Twenty-four Americans lost their lives at the Battle of North Point. The event organizers ask “How can we honor these men?” That’s how the Star-Spangled Banner Barrel was created (Photo #5). The Barrel has 24 4’ by 6’ flags with 15 stars and 15 stripes with the names of the 24 Americans displayed at the base. The barrel has had a lot of use in recent years at different events, including parades and a weekend at the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House in Baltimore.

Defenders Day will go back to a one-day event in 2015. If you are in Baltimore on Saturday, September 5, stop by Defenders Day at Fort Howard Part and ask for me, “The Flag Man.”

Scot M. Guenter

Most citizens of the United States will recognize the name of the author of our national anthem, Francis Scott Key, but few will know much at all about his life and experiences. Marc Leepson, in this quick read of a biography, offers anyone interested the opportunity to understand Key the man as very much a person representative of his era, as Leepson nicely positions Key among some of the tensions, issues and concerns of the young and growing nation—and more specifically, amid the legal and political skirmishes he participated in as a distinguished attorney in Maryland and Washington, D.C. Completing this book, the reader will not only feel he knows Key well, he will better understand how the unresolved issue of slavery was pulling the nation into opposing camps in the antebellum period, even as Jacksonian democracy was reconstituting party politics and an expanding commercial system was transforming the comforts and practices of everyday life.

Vexillologists should recognize Leepson’s name—his 2005 publication *Flag: An American Biography* (Thomas Dunn Books) is the best one-volume basic cultural history of the American flag we have. He has also written books of note about Monticello, the life of Lafayette, and the Civil War battle of Monocacy. His writing style in *What So Proudly We Hailed* is recognizable to readers of these earlier works, too: direct and a bit breezy—targeting the common man, not a group of specialists or professors of history. He performs a valuable service, as the last biography written on Key was published in 1937, and Leepson’s approach of situating Key squarely among the nation’s contradictions on slavery is a much more useful way to help 21st-century readers better contextualize and thus comprehend the man.

I would put this on the shelf next to Marla R. Miller’s 2010 biography on Betsy Ross, which I also recommend to inquiring vexillologists. Although not as dense in intellectual, social, and labor history as Miller’s work, Leepson’s biography on Key shares a similar trait: he recognizes that making the book only about—or even primarily about—the writing of “Defence of Fort M’Henry” (which soon became “The Star-Spangled Banner”) ultimately does us the disservice of not seeing how flag events or practices of patriotism fit complexly into the larger web of human experience. The tale of what happened that night after the twilight’s last gleaming will be told in detail in Chapter 5, but that is just one chapter out of eighteen. And there is much more going on in Key’s life—he interacted with so many significant and fascinating people who helped shape the United States—even while he worked zealously for the Episcopal Church, the American Colonization
Society, the Lancaster school movement, or the American Bible Society, or served as a federal attorney for the District of Columbia, a campaigner for and advisor to Andrew Jackson, or a loving husband and father to his wife and eleven children (two of whom would die tragically before him). He was a poet (at times, a rather sentimental and insipid one, in my humble opinion), but what his contemporaries knew him best for were his long-winded perorations in court or the many righteous public orations he delighted so in giving. Among the interesting events covered are Key’s service in the Battle of Bladensburg, his role in the Peggy Eaton affair, his defense of Rep. Sam Houston when tried before the House of Representatives for contempt, his legal defense more than once for some so-called slaves arguing for and sometimes securing their freedom in court, but also his hard line taken against abolitionists in court, most profoundly demonstrated in the Reuben Crandall trial and the Snow Riot in Washington, D.C. that it helped trigger.

With regard to flag related issues, Leepson takes up and ably responds to two often asked questions regarding the national anthem: (1) Did Francis Scott Key intend it as a song or did somebody else make that connection later and (2) which was the flag flying over Fort McHenry referred to in his poem—was it the storm flag or the garrison flag? I’ll leave it to you to consult his book for the answers he gives. (For what it’s worth, I agree with him on both counts, too.)

I did note one small error related to flag history in this volume’s epilogue that I would like to correct, however. In briefly summarizing the social history of the national anthem through the years, Leepson, drawing no doubt on earlier reference sources, writes “the first documented performance of the song at a sporting event” occurred during the seventh inning stretch of the first game of the 1918 World Series between the Chicago Cubs and the Boston Red Sox. Actually, the connection between sporting events and the national anthem of the United States goes back much further. The best times to look for outbursts of patriotism expressed through flag rituals are times of crisis and war, and in Brooklyn right after the outbreak of the Spanish American War we have an earlier, clear newspaper record of Mae Ebbets, the teenage daughter of the owner of the new Washington Park ball field, hoisting the American flag over that stadium on opening day April 30, 1898, while a band played the national anthem, a choir sang, and thousands in the crowd of about 14,000 waved small flags in their hands as they too sang along. And when the Capitoline Grounds opened in Brooklyn even earlier, way back in 1862, during the Civil War itself, there is a record of “The Star-Spangled Banner” being played, connecting the sport to the song during that time of increased heightened awareness. (For more wonderful anecdotes connecting flags to the history of baseball, see James Breig’s 2014 booklet Star-Spangled Baseball: True Tales of Flags and Fields, available as an e-book on Kindle.)

With this volume, Marc Leepson has done modern readers a meaningful historical service to better understand the values and practices of Francis Scott Key, the author of our national anthem. It is an interesting coincidence that his dear friend for life and brother-in-law, Roger Taney, would rise to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and pen the infamous Dred Scott v. Sandford, 60 U.S. 393 (1857) decision, which would escalate the divisions leading to the subsequent outbreak of a civil war, provoked by that same national flag flying over another fort, Fort Sumter, in 1861. And though Key had certainly helped advance the process of flag sanctification by his War of 1812 romantic poem using rhetorical shifts to empower the banner with special, God-given significance, ultimately it would be the U.S. Civil War that would wed the North irrevocably to the symbol of the U.S. flag as the most meaningful spiritual embodiment of a shared national ethos.
Left: Francis Scott Key's original manuscript of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS & PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION.