

Flag House Dedication Tomorrow: Structure At Pratt And Albemarle ...

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Flag House Dedication Tomorrow

Structure At Pratt And Albemarle Streets Will Become National Shrine After Many Years

In Neighborhood Rich Historically, It Was Home Of Maker Of Star-Spangled Banner

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ

AS gay as any flapper, in a fresh coat of paint, there stands on the northwest corner of Pratt and Albemarle streets, a Colonial dwelling that will be formally opened tomorrow as one of the nation's shrines. The tenth anniversary of Armistice Day occurring on Sunday, the following day has been chosen for this notable house to enter upon its patriotic mission.

It was in this house that the Star-spangled Banner was made, the victory flag that continued to wave above Fort M'Henry on September 13 and 14, 1814, during the fort's bombardment by the British and so inspired Key's poem. Here lived the widow, Mrs. Mary (Young) Pickersgill and her 14-year-old daughter, Caroline, who assisted her mother in making the flag.

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD

To the north of the house looms the hoary shof tower; just round the corner is the old town residence of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, where the venerated signer of the Declaration of Independence died.

A little distance west off Pratt street, is the old President street station, where Massachusetts troopers of the Civil War received most unfriendly welcome at the hands of Baltimore citizens, while all along Pratt street to Light street, sparkles the water of the harbor where ships from many lands find anchorage. An historic neighborhood and for many reasons an interesting one.

BUILT IN 1793

As for the Flag House itself, erected in 1793 on what in royalist days was known as Queen street, but which is now numbered 844 East Pratt street, it is a quaint two-story dwelling built solidly of bricks laid after the fashion known as Flemish bond, with hip roof and dormer windows. It is a house typical of Baltimore dwellings of its period. Its timbers and laths are ax-hewn; its window frames joined with wooden pegs; its great twin chimneys unite in a roomy attic, for the house had known only large open fireplaces in lieu of heating plants until the house committee of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association installed modern heating facilities.

Artists have likened the homelike residence to the Old Curiosity Shop of London made famous by Charles Dickens, for the house committee has restored the building to as nearly as possible its appearance when Mrs. Pickersgill lived there and wrought the flag which today looks odd with its fifteen stars and fifteen stripes. Walls have been scraped until the original colonial yellow finish was reached. The lower corner room remains in this cheerful color. Above the two enormous open fireplaces have been placed wooden mantels of antiquity and classic simplicity, the gift of J. Frederick Broening, 107 East Montgomery street, brother of Mayor Broening.

INTERESTING FITTINGS

The side door of the house has a brass knocker in the design of an American eagle and the small square garden in the rear of the home is adorned with a fine brick wall surmounted with an iron railing and with an iron gateway, the bricks being given by Mrs. William F. Pentz, 1646 East Fayette street, as a memorial to her deceased husband. Dr. William F. Pentz. In the second front room, where the Star-Spangled Banner was made, there has been placed above the open chimney place a wooden mantel of fine lines, donated by John H. Lederer, 103 South Broadway, which the donor knows to be over 150 years old. A quaint little wooden mantel was found in the house over an open hearth in one of the back rooms.

It is a house abounding with odd little cupboards and cubbyholes, with

an attic staircase, where the unwary will receive a rude bump of the head, and one of the few modern additions to the house is bathroom with running water. This became essential if the association was to keep a custodian there. The large attic room is the home of this custodian, Arthur Sewell, veteran of the World War, whose house-keeping apartments also include a small sitting room and kitchenette in the back of the second story. To this cheerful honeymoon suite, the custodian has brought his bride.

MOVE TO BUY HOUSE

The movement to acquire and restore this notable house, birthplace of The Star-Spangled Banner, was launched successfully on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1927. The Star-Spangled Banner Centennial Commission, through its chairman, Dr. A. B. Bibbins, had desired to acquire the house back in 1914 as a feature of that celebration, but the trustees of the Samuel Ready School were not then willing to sell it, although they did place a bronze tablet upon the wall. Samuel Ready had been a soldier at the Battle of North Point, September 12, 1814, and served under Lieut.-Col. William McDonald, of the Sixth Regiment Maryland Militia. Lieutenant Colonel McDonald resided four doors west of the Flag House, which fact may have influenced Samuel Ready to purchase it.

When Congress, in 1927, made provision for the restoration of Fort M'Henry, which had sheltered thousands of the first wounded soldiers of the World War as they returned from France, members of the historical committee of the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial Commission again appealed to the trustees owning the house to allow the house to be sold for patriotic purposes, and this time were successful in obtaining the desired commission to purchase the property within a given time. A resolution indorsing the movement was introduced by Mrs. A. B. Bibbins at the February meeting of the Maryland Historical Society in 1927. The project was unanimously indorsed as timely and a committee of three was appointed to cooperate. Officers and members of several patriotic societies offered assistance and the campaign was launched February 22, 1927.

CITY AIDED PURCHASE

When the campaign for the purchase and restoration of the Flag House was interrupted by the appeals for the Mississippi flood sufferers and the time for the option on the house nearly expired, the Board of Estimates of Baltimore City, under Mayor Howard W. Jackson, generously made provision for its purchase by the city in the spring of 1927 and the custody of the house was placed in the hands of the Flag House Association, Inc., by Mayor William F. Broening, at the War Memorial, on June 14, 1927, one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the first official flag—the Stars and Stripes of the United States.

Not the least interesting feature of the story of the flag is the fact of its making by a lady whose mother had made for General Washington the flag under which Washington took command of the troops at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The maker of the flag of fifteen stars and fifteen stripes for Fort M'Henry, as mentioned, was Mrs. Mary (Young)

Pickersgill. Her uncle was Col. Benjamin Flower, commissary-general of Revolutionary stores in Philadelphia

and closely associated with Washington. Her mother, Mrs. Rebecca (Flower) Young "made the first flag of the Revolution, under General Washington's direction," according to her granddaughter, Caroline Pickersgill, in a letter written to Mrs. Georgianna Appleton. [The latter inherited the Star-Spangled Banner from her father, Col. George Armistead, who so valiantly defended it at Fort M'Henry.] "And for this reason," Caroline's letter continued, "my mother was selected by Commodore Barney and General Stricker, family connections, to make this Star-Spangled Banner, being an exceedingly patriotic woman."

The two Revolutionary officers who gave Mrs. Pickersgill the commission to make the flag were: Gen. John Stricker, commander at the Battle of North Point, fought September 11, 1814, and Commodore Joshua Barney (1759-1815), commander of the famous privateer *Rossie* and defender of the National Capital, August 25, 1814.

IN SMITHSONIAN

The original Star-Spangled Banner, long preserved by Col. George Armistead's grandson, Mr. Eben Appleton, is now in the Smithsonian Institution. At the request of the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial Commission in 1914 it was carefully backed with Irish linen at great expense by the institution and said to be good for another hundred years or more. Its size is 29 by 36 feet.

The oft-told tale of the dramatic incident that led up to Key writing the song that has immortalized him is one of the most beautiful in American history. The home of Dr. William Beanes, of Upper Marlboro, Prince George's county, had been commandeered as his military headquarters by General Ross, of the British invading army of 1812-1814, when that enemy attacked and burned the National Capital. General Ross requited his host for courtesies shown him by ordering Dr. Beanes' arrest, and the latter was hurried as a prisoner of war to the vessel *Minden*, of the British squadron about to engage in an attack upon Baltimore. Alarmed for the safety of his friend, Francis Scott Key, regardless of danger to himself, hastened to the cartel ship *Minden*. He carried a flag of truce and was permitted to board, but not to leave the vessel again, as the bombardment of Fort M'Henry was beginning. It was a night of struggle, and the song written by Key as he gazed at the bom-

bardment burst spontaneously from the fullness of a grateful heart.

Released by the defeated British, Key hastened to Baltimore. The song was broadcast and the national anthem was born.

STORY OF THE WORK

To Mrs. Arthur Barneveld Bibbins is due indefatigable research work that has resulted in assembling facts concerning both the Flag House and Mrs. Pickersgill. The letter from Caroline (Pickersgill) Purdy, previously mentioned, has some specially interesting matter, thus:

"The flag being so very large, my mother was obliged to obtain permission from the proprietors of Clagget's Brewery, which was in our neighborhood, to spread it out in their malt house, and I remember seeing my mother down on the floor, placing the stars. After the completion of the flag, she superintended the topping (*i. e.* heading) of it, having it fastened in the most secure manner, to prevent its being torn away by balls. The wisdom of her precautions was shown during the engagement, many shots piercing it, but it still remained firm to the staff.

Your father, Col. George Armistead, declared no one but the maker of the flag should mend it, and suggested that the rents should be bound around. . . . The flag, I think, contained 400 yards of bunting, and my mother worked many nights until 12 o'clock to complete it in a given time."

THE WASHINGTON FLAG

The "first flag of the Revolution," which Rebecca Young had made for Washington, was doubtless the Grand Union Flag under which Washington took command of the American Army at Cambridge, Mass., January 1, 1776. It had no stars but consisted of thirteen alternate red and white stripes, representing the thirteen United Colonies of North America with, in the upper left-hand corner, the British Union Jack, which consisted of a blue field with the red vertical cross of St. George, edged with white, and the white diagonal cross of St. Andrew of Scotland. This flag, sometimes called the Great Union Flag, Union Flag, Continental Flag and Cambridge Flag, because of its first being hoisted there, was adopted without any formal legislative authority from the Continental Congress. It may be regarded as official, however, for the short time it was in use, since it had the sanction of Washington in its adoption.

It was on June 14, 1777, that Congress gave official sanction to the national flag, by the following resolution entered in its journal: "Resolved, that the Flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, that the Union be thirteen stars, white, in a blue field representing a new constellation."

Rebecca (Flower) Young had a family of six small children, besides the care of her infant daughter, Mary, and the family Bible of the Flower, Young, Pickersgill family, published in London, in 1724, is one of the chief treasures of the Baltimore Flag House. It contains the following statement: "When the British attacked Philadelphia, September, 1777, William Young, his wife Rebecca and family fled in an oxcart. Being closely pursued, they hid a chest containing their silver, with this Bible. But months afterward the chest was found, broken open and despoiled of its contents. The Bible was found on the ground saturated with rain and much torn."

Before fleeing, at the approach of the British Army at this time, Congress had committed to Col. Benjamin Flower, Mrs. Pickersgill's uncle, the safety of the Liberty Bell. To Colonel Flower was also committed the Christ Church chimes and the valued American military stores. He is said by tradition to have concealed them down the Allentown road and so carefully were they hidden that the enemy never found them. Washington was so gratified by this service that he presented Colonel Flower with a handsome sword.

A remarkably fine but little known portrait of Colonel Flower, as painted by Charles Willson Peale and skillfully restored last year by the Austrian expert, Anton M. Verbik, which will adorn the Flag House, shows the Revolutionary officer clad in his uniform and with his honors portrayed with rare detail. The sword and letter of commendation are in his hands. His right hand points to Independence Hall, while he is surrounded with the mortar and ammunition of a fort.

The portrait of Mrs. Pickersgill, a replica of one which hangs in the Aged Women's Home, which home she founded, hangs in the Flag Room where she and Caroline made the flag.

NEIGHBORS AIDED

The residents of Baltimore living in the neighborhood of the Flag House have taken great interest in the restoration of the Flag House and several Camp Fire Girls of the Italian Settlement, 910 Fawn street, have made a small replica of the Star-Spangled

Banner as a gift to the house. They are Misses Jennie Magliora, Santa Valenti, Rose and Jose Mogavera, Julia D'Alessandro, Stella Boyd and Flora Granese.

The officers and directors of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association are: President, Dr. James D. Iglehart; vice-presidents, Dr. Arthur B. Bibbins and Miss Harriet P. Marine; recording secretary, Mrs. George B. Parker; corresponding secretary, Miss Florence P. Sadler; treasurer, Walter W. Beers; historian, Mrs. Arthur Barneveld Bibbins; counselor, Richard M. Duvall; chaplain, Dr. Edward L. Watson. Directorate: Mayor William F. Broening, Judge Walter I. Dawkins, Messrs. R. Walter Graham, Howard Bryant, John Coulbourn, William L. Marbury, Mrs. Oscar B. Coblentz, Mrs. Nicholas L. Dashiell, Mrs. Reuben Ross Holloway, Mrs. Frank Onion, Mrs. Henry Stockbridge, Mrs. Robert A. Welsh, Mrs.

Miles White, the Misses Grace E. Bouldin and Olive W. Denais. The Flag House will be open to the public tomorrow from 2 to 5 o'clock and the dedication will be at 8 o'clock that night. The address of welcome will be made by Dr. James D. Iglehart. Other speeches will be by Miss Harriet P. Marine, Dr. A. B. Bibbins, Mayor Broening, Richard M. Duvall and Major Francis Scott Key Smith, great-grandnephew of Francis Scott Key.