

The National Anthem On The Fourth Of July

by Lynne Belluscio

I was looking for an account of the Fourth of July in LeRoy during the Civil War and came across an announcement on July 2, 1861, for a "great strawberry festival" to be held on the Fourth of July at Starr Hall in benefit of St Mark's Church. Mr. Tozier was to give the address and the Rev. Samuel Cox, Chancellor of Ingham University was to share patriotic reminiscences. "The evening otherwise enlivened by national airs and songs."

In the following week's edition of the *Pennsaver*, there was a most unusual account of the event. It was noted that it was a rather warm evening - 90 degrees. Mr. Tozier's address was "full of patriotism, pathos and eloquence - sketching the origin, progress and evils of the present rebellion." (Known now as the Civil War.)

"Rev Cox followed in some off-hand reminiscences of the past history of our beloved country. The Doctor was, as he always is, interesting and instructive in his remarks." (He was also known to be long winded and very erudite.) The ladies of St. Mark's "behind their breastworks of flowers and fruits, opened on the assailants with ice cream and strawberries, lemonade and ice water, while our side shelled them with dimes and other centsible missiles. ... All the tables were at this moment attacked with energy, throughout

the Hall, but the ladies in the entrenchments cried for quarters and came off conquerors - for we had spent our last dime and had nary a quarter left." I suspect that this was at the beginning of the war and the military rhetoric was humorous at the time. Probably later in the war it wouldn't have been as humorous.

A choir provided the music, which included the "performance of a National Anthem." The question here is which anthem did they sing, because *The Star Spangled Banner* was not the National Anthem in 1861. There was no National Anthem at the time. *The Star Spangled Banner* had been written as a poem by Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812, but other songs were just as popular. *Hail Columbia* was probably the most popular during the 19th Century.

In 1889, the Star Spangled Banner was recognized by the Navy as the song to be played during the raising of the flag. In 1916, it was chosen as the Presidential anthem but it wasn't until March 3, 1931, by a Congressional Resolution, that it officially became the National Anthem. (Thanks to the internet, I discovered that it was first played at the World Series in 1918, during the seventh inning stretch.) I also discovered that in 1861, Oliver Wendell Holmes added a fifth stanza to the Star



Spangled Banner, in indignation over the start of the Civil War. It appeared in song books of the era. Perhaps the anthem sung at Starr Hall on the evening of July 4, 1861 included the verse by Oliver Wendell Homes. (I have tried putting the words to the music and have found it very difficult.)

When our land is illuminated with liberty's smile,
If foe from within strikes a

blow at her glory,
Down, down with the traitor that tries to defile
The flag of the stars, and the page of her story!
By the millions unchained,
Who their birthright have gained
We will keep her bright blazon forever unstained;
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
While the land of the free is the home of the brave.

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