

America - 'My Country; 'Tis of Thee...'

Samuel F. Smith

In 1829 a man named William Woodbridge returned to the U.S. from Europe with several german music books. He passed them on to the noted musician Lowell Mason, who could not read german. He in turn passed them to an Andover theological student named Samuel F. Smith, requesting he translate them. Smith's attention was caught by one particular tune which inspired him to write words for a patriotic song, not knowing this same tune had already been used for patriotic songs in Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Swizerland, Russia, Austria, and Great Britain ('God Save the King'). Smith wrote his words in the space of an hour. Hymnody history tells us he wrote five verses but deleted one prior to publication. The extra verses shown here were once sung as if part of this hymn but have fallen into disuse.

My country, 'tis of Thee,
Sweet Land of Liberty
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let Freedom ring.

My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet Freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God to Thee,
Author of Liberty,
To thee we sing,
Long may our land be bright
With Freedom's holy light,

Protect us by Thy might
Great God, our King.

Added but little-used:

Our glorious Land today,
'Neath Education's sway,
Soars upward still.
Its hills of learning fair,
Whose bounties all may share,
Behold them everywhere
On vale and hill!

Thy safeguard, Liberty,
The school shall ever be,
Our Nation's pride!
No tyrant hand shall smite,
While with encircling might
All here are taught the Right
With Truth allied.

Beneath Heaven's gracious will
The stars of progress still
Our course do sway;
In unity sublime
To broader heights we climb,
Triumphant over Time,

God speeds our way!

Grand birthright of our sires,
Our altars and our fires
Keep we still pure!
Our starry flag unfurled,
The hope of all the world,
In peace and light impearled,
God hold secure!