



# ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## STAR SPANGLED BANNER

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1814 the British, led by General Robert Ross, occupied Washington D.C. and burned the White House, the U.S. Capitol, the Library of Congress, the Treasury and numerous other government buildings. This action during the War of 1812 was denounced not only by Americans but by many Europeans. The First Lady barely managed to escape. Dolley Madison, assisted by several slaves and servants, was able to save some of the valuable silver as well as the portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart.

A week after the burning of Washington, British troops arrived at the Baltimore Port in Maryland. The British had captured Dr. William Beanes during the raid on Washington. Francis Scott Key came to the port to seek the release of Beanes on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Both men were detained because the British Royal Navy planned to bombard Fort McHenry located there. They did not want Beanes or Key to alert the American troops.

At dawn of September 14<sup>th</sup> Key was amazed to see the huge American flag (now hanging in the Smithsonian National Museum of America) still waving in the wind. It had not been removed in defeat. Key was so moved that he wrote a poem entitled "In Defense of Fort McHenry."

Eventually the poem was set to music composed by John Stafford Smith. Today this poem and music are acknowledged as The Star Spangled Banner, the national anthem of the United States. It was accepted as our anthem for over a century. However, when it was sung at the Baseball World Series in 1917 to honor the men fighting in World War I, the audience was especially moved. It was then played at every game afterwards. Congress proclaimed the Star Spangled Banner as our official national anthem on March 3, 1931.

Singer Whitney Houston, who tragically passed away this year, became famous for her rendition of the anthem at Super Bowl XXV in 1991. She dedicated it to the men fighting in the Persian Gulf War. Thousands of people requested a copy of this song. The Star Spangled Banner actually made The Top Ten. Much of the royalties went to various charities, especially the Red Cross. After the 911 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City, people once more requested her rendition. She donated most of the proceeds to the firefighters and policemen of New York City and to the families of the victims.

Many of the people in Western New York remember her performance. It was at the Super Bowl Game where the Buffalo Bills lost to the Giants. The Bill's field goal was wide to the right.

Information for this article was obtained through various historical internet sites.