

# TOM WHITE

NEWS AMERICAN COLUMNIST

## Why Maryland sings about Yankee despots

What's the official Maryland insect?

That question popped up recently when a friend entertained his dinner guests with a quiz on Maryland symbols and history.

No one but the host knew that our official insect is the Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly, so designated by act of the legislature in 1973.

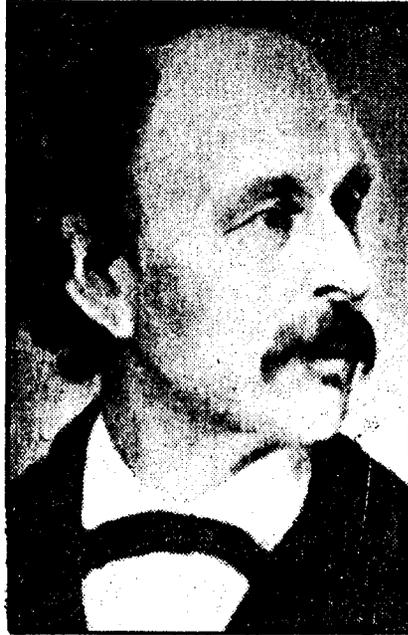
There were a lot of easy questions, like identifying the state bird (the Baltimore Oriole, of course), the state dog (the Chesapeake Bay retriever) and the state sport (jousting), but the real stumper came when the host brought up the subject of our state song and how it came into being. It is a yarn worth the telling for those unfamiliar with it.

The author, of course, was James Ryder Randall, son of the man who founded Randallstown. Young Randall was an ardent Confederate sympathizer, who had tried to join the Confederate army but was turned down because of his frail physique. He headed south to New Orleans where he obtained work as a teacher.

On the night of April 26, 1861, he read a newspaper account of the fighting on Pratt Street between Confederate sympathizers and a Massachusetts regiment passing through Baltimore on its way to set up headquarters in Annapolis.

Profoundly moved, Randall couldn't sleep and at midnight arose and by candlelight dashed off the words of the poem which was to become "Maryland, My Maryland."

The next morning he read the poem to his students and they exhorted him to have it published, which he did in a New Orleans newspaper. The poem caught on and people started singing it to the tune of a French song, "My Normandy."



**RANDALL:** He was too frail for the Confederate army.

It began to make its way north and within a month it turned up in Baltimore.

At that time there was a group of young ladies known as the "Monument Street Girls" which used to meet at the home of James Carroll at 105 W. Monument St. and sew clothes and uniforms for Baltimoreans who had rushed away to join the Confederate forces with only the clothes on their backs.

A handsome young swain named H. Rozier Dulaney used to drop in on the girls, and one morning he showed up with a copy of Randall's poem without music which had been given him by a man on Baltimore Street.

The girls were thrilled and insisted it had to be set to music. A Yale

book of songs was atop the piano and leafing through it they came across "Lauriger Horatius," otherwise known as "Tannenbaum." The only trouble was the meter cried out for two additional words to make the poem fit, and young Dulaney solved the problem. Where Randall had written in the word "Maryland," Dulaney suggested adding the words "My Maryland."

That made for a perfect fit.

The girls urged Dulaney to get the song published, but he demurred, saying he didn't want to wind up in the Union Army's jail cells at Fort McHenry. One of the girls said she would do it because her father was a Union sympathizer and would be able to get her out of jail if necessary. So she took it to a publishing firm on N. Charles Street, and soon it spread through Baltimore.

Now, two of the "Monument Street Girls" were sisters, Hattie and Jeannie Cary. The clothes they were sewing had been smuggled to troops in the South by sympathizers, but that route soon dried up. And so the two girls decided they would take several trunks of the garments to the troops themselves.

Accompanied by their brother, they were escorted by friends to the Virginia state line where they were able to commandeer a dray pulled by a mule and an ox. Hattie had secreted a Maryland flag on her person which she promptly raised on the wagon and the trio set off for Fairfax happily singing "Maryland, My Maryland."

At Fairfax they delivered their trunks of clothes to the Confederate garrison and were feted at a dinner that night. The troops serenaded the girls and then asked if they would sing a song since they hadn't heard a

female voice in some time.

The girls responded with "Maryland, My Maryland" and the troops went wild, picking up the refrain and singing it themselves.

In the months to come the song spread through every state in the Confederacy and became the musical symbol of defiance for the south.

Randall wrote some 50 poems in his lifetime but, as so often happens, one was so outstanding the others have been forgotten. Curiously, it was not until 1939 that the legislature got around to making it the official state song.

The next time some legislator in Annapolis tries to rescind that action because the words are too harsh, someone ought to tell him this story.

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