

A Flag Discovery

The Smithsonian Museum of American History is one of my favorite places to visit. I could spend days there, wrapped in thought and reflection. One of the sights for visitors is the flag that flew over Fort McHenry when Francis Scott Key wrote *The Star-Spangled Banner* in 1814. In these days of challenges to our freedoms and attacks by terrorists, the flag is ever more important in the national consciousness.

The original flag measured 42 feet by 30 feet. It was the immense size of the flag that allowed Key to see it from his position 10 miles out to sea, following a night of gunfire.

The means by which a flag that large could fly on a pole 189 feet in the air is on display at Fort McHenry on Baltimore's inner harbor. There in one of the barracks are two oak timbers, eight feet by eight feet, joined as a cross. National Park Service personnel discovered this cross-shaped support near the entrance to Fort McHenry in 1958 buried nine feet in the ground.

Not only did the cross piece help rangers locate the original site from which the Star-Spangled Banner flew, it answered the mystery of how such a large flag could fly in stormy weather without snapping the pole. This unseen wooden device provided a firm foundation for the symbol of our national freedom.

For Christians, the cross of Christ is the symbol of the foundation by which our faith is rooted and supported.

--Beecher Hunter