

Historic Character Timeline

1776 - 1789 - During the American Revolution the United States was governed by a Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. One of its most famous members was **Benjamin Franklin**, printer, scientist, and inventor. The Congress of which Franklin was a member appointed **George Washington** to lead the American army against the British. One day Washington approached **Rebecca Flower Young**, a Philadelphia pennant and colors maker, and asked her to make a flag of his design for use by the troops. The flag he designed became known as the Grand Union Flag. It was a symbol of the determination of the United States to become independent of England. Years later, Rebecca Flower Young assisted her daughter in making an even more famous flag for our country.

A symbol of our country, "**Uncle Sam**," got its start in this period. Sam Wilson was a meat packer in Arlington, Massachusetts, whose honesty in business made him very popular. He was affectionately known as "Uncle Sam." • When war broke out in 1812, he supplied beef and pork to the troops. To differentiate between crates of meat going to soldiers and crates going to other places, he marked some crates "U.S." to indicate that they were meant for United States soldiers. But some people said that the crates marked "U.S." stood for Uncle Sam. Soon people were saying that the meat came from "Uncle Sam." •

Our country was founded with the ideal that "all men are created equal," meaning that every person deserves respect and an equal chance to succeed in our society. But when our country was new, most black people were slaves. Few blacks were free, and fewer had the respect of their fellow Americans or the chance to succeed on their own. **Benjamin Banneker**, a free-black born in Baltimore County, was an exception. During his lifetime, Banneker (whose mother, Mary Banneker, was white) wrote an Almanac; became an astronomer (a person who studies the stars); a surveyor who helped to plan the city of Washington. Benjamin Banneker exchanged letters with **Thomas Jefferson** when Jefferson was president.

1805 - 1812 - This was a period when the new United States was trying to steer clear of the war troubles between England and France. American trading ships and naval ships and sailors were being impressed, or captured, on the high seas by the two countries at war. Presidents **Thomas Jefferson and James Madison** tried negotiation and economic pressure to stop France and England from interfering with our ships and sailors, but were unsuccessful. England was the biggest offender, and in 1812 the United States declared war against her.

In August of 1814 the English burned the capitol of the United States in Washington. **Dolley Madison**, the wife of the president, rescued a portrait of George Washington from the President's House before it was burned, and after the war was over she was presented with a British flag.

The next month the British attacked Baltimore. During the bombardment of Fort McHenry **Francis Scott Key** wrote "The Star Spangled Banner" in honor of the men at Fort McHenry and the very big Flag that flew over the Fort. **The Fort McHenry Guard**, here with us today, is the spiritual descendants of the soldiers who defended the Fort. The Flag, which is called the Star Spangled Banner, was made here in Baltimore by **Mary Young Pickersgill**, whose mother, Rebecca Flower Young, had made the Grand Union flag for George Washington.

1814 - 1865 - The United States was growing during this time. Settlers began filling the territory bought from France (in 1803) known as the Louisiana Purchase. In the 1840s, the Republic of Texas became part of the United States and another war was fought, this time with Mexico. When the war ended in 1847, the United States gained the territory which now makes up the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah.

The United States was growing in other ways, too. Canals were constructed and steamships sailed down large rivers and bays. The railroads got started and trains were taking people from one growing city to another. There were movements in the country for better educational systems, for prison reform, women's rights and an end to slavery.

Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman were leaders in the fight to abolish slavery. Douglass was a free black man who had been a slave. From the 1830s until the Civil War (1861-1865) he wrote and spoke for freedom for the slaves. After the war he called for better treatment of blacks in the United States. Free blacks were often discriminated against. Harriet Tubman was also born a slave. She helped to guide nearly 300 slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad in the 1850s.

Slavery was a troubling issue in the 1840's and 1850's, and it was a leading cause of the Civil War that broke out in 1861. **Abraham Lincoln** was president during the Civil War. He believed that the country had to solve the problem of slavery, but that it also had to remain united. It had to remain "the United States." Through Mr. Lincoln's steadfast leadership during the Civil War, the institution of slavery was finally abolished, and the United States was preserved as a nation.

During the war, women on both sides of the conflict served as nurses. One of the most famous women to serve for the Union was **Clara Barton**. Many people at the time thought that women weren't brave enough or strong enough to be on the battlefield. But Clara Barton proved these people wrong.

During the war she dodged bullets and enemy soldiers many times. She helped to find over 22,000 missing soldiers. Before the war Clara Barton was one of the first women to work for the federal government - in the Patent Office. After the war she became the first president of the American Red Cross.

Several generals served with honor and valor on both sides of the Civil War, among them were **Winfield Scott Hancock** and **George Gordon Meade** for the Union, and **Isaac Ridgeway Trimble** for the Confederacy.

Winfield Scott Hancock was named for a hero of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, and served in the Mexican War himself. He was a graduate of West Point Military Academy. During the Civil War he played important roles in the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. After the assassination of President Lincoln, it was Hancock who was put in charge of executing the conspirators in the president's murder. In 1880, Hancock ran for president, but lost to **James Garfield**, another Civil War general.

George Gordon Meade was a man who early in life demonstrated an aptitude for academic pursuits, especially in math and science. Like Hancock he was a graduate of West Point. During the Civil War he saw action in many battles. In 1863 President Lincoln promoted Meade to lead the Army of the Potomac just before the battle that turned the tide of the war in the Union's favor, the Battle of Gettysburg. Under Meade's inspirational leadership the Army of the Potomac defeated the Confederate forces under **General Robert E. Lee** in three of the bloodiest days of the war.

Isaac Ridgeway Trimble was chief engineer of the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad at the time that the Civil War began. Although he had lived in Maryland for many years he was originally from Virginia, and he opposed plans to invade the South. During the war he served the Confederacy with valor. He was wounded at Gettysburg.

William Carney was born a slave in Virginia in 1842. He followed his father into freedom on the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War he joined the famous **54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry**. He fought valiantly for the Union cause. Years later he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the first African-American so honored.

1866-1914 - After the war many of the newly freed black men became soldiers in the U.S. Army out west. They were called **Buffalo Soldiers**. When the Spanish American War broke out in 1898, it was the buffalo soldiers who helped **Teddy Roosevelt** lead the charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba.

Meanwhile, other Americans began to feel the need for greater patriotic expression. The "school house movement" of 1890-92 assisted school children all over the country in getting American Flags to fly above their schools in time for the celebration of Columbus Day in 1892. As part of that celebration, the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America, a man from New York named **Francis Bellamy** wrote the "Pledge of Allegiance," which we have recited today.

1914-1917 - In 1914, a great war broke out in Europe. It is now called **World War I**. In 1917 the United States entered that war "to make the world safe for democracy." • At Fort McHenry a hospital was built to take care of the American soldiers wounded in the war. It was called General Hospital # 2. The hospital was made up of over one hundred buildings outside the Fort. It was located all around where you, boys and girls, are sitting this morning.

One of the nurses who attended the wounded soldiers was **Emily Raine Williams**. She and the other nurses who worked at the hospital here treated over twenty thousand wounded and sick men in five years. And even though the hours were long and the work was hard, she said that nursing at Fort McHenry was "a pleasant job" because it allowed her to help others. And at the end of every day, she wrote, the thing that impressed her most was the vision of the American Flag, "there, high up on the rampart...[and] every able-bodied person [standing] at attention..." •