

125th Anniversary of the Stars & Stripes Forever

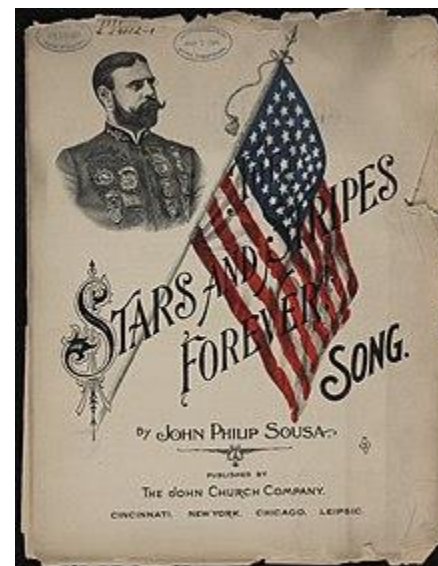
All of his life, John Philip Sousa loved music and loved America, so it's no surprise that he wrote this patriotic classic. Sousa grew up in Washington, D.C., during the Civil War. As a kid, he enjoyed hearing the Civil War military bands that filled the streets of Washington as well as the sounds of his father's trombone. His father played in the U.S. Marine Band and Sousa quickly followed in his footsteps. Sousa first enlisted in the Marine Band as an apprentice violinist and later became the bandleader. When Sousa wasn't playing with a band, he was writing music, like "The Stars and Stripes Forever." By the 1890s he had written enough popular marches to be nicknamed the "March King."

Sousa believed that in order to write inspiring music--music that would "make goose pimples chase each other up and down your spine"--he had to be inspired when he wrote it. Some of his inspiration came from a "higher power" and some of it came from his imagination. When composing a march, Sousa would often "turn my imagination loose among scenes of barbaric splendor. I picture to myself the glitter of guns and swords, the tread of feet to the drum beat, and all that is grand and glorious in military scenes." Sousa also found inspiration in everyday life. The inspiration for "The Stars and Stripes Forever" came while Sousa was traveling home to the United States and learned of his friend's death.

He contributed over 100 marches, about 10 light operas, several waltzes and overtures. He composed the march "The George Washington BiCentennial March" in 1930 in honor of the 200th birthday anniversary of George Washington.

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