

Stories by Madelyn Rohrer

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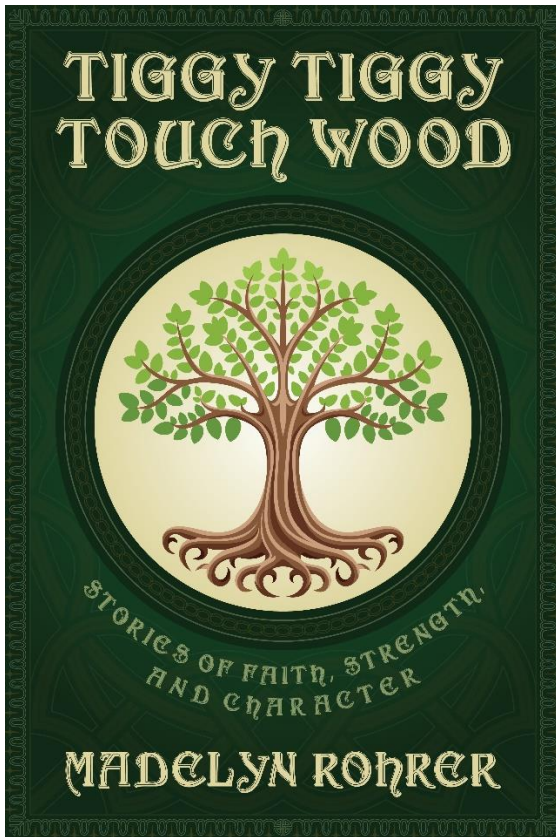
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In The Spotlight:



Tiggy Tiggy Touch Wood *2025 Revision*

Tiggy Tiggy Touch Wood is the book that started my story writing journey in 2014. I never envisioned myself as an author, although I always enjoyed writing things like newsletters, poems, and sometimes blurbs for special occasions. No, telling stories from the stage was certainly exciting enough for me.

However, it wasn't long after becoming a storyteller in Jonesborough, Tennessee, the home of international storytelling, that I became aware of the necessity to protect and preserve my stories with copyrights. After telling one of my stories on stage, I heard that someone else was telling my story to an audience without requesting permission or giving the usual appropriate credit for the source. That happens with oral stories, I was told. Not fair? I didn't think so, especially after all the hours I invested to create, practice, and perform this piece of original work. But on the other hand, isn't that what stories are supposed to be for...to share with others who hopefully will like it enough to re-tell it? The missing link was ownership – whose story is it? Who owns it?

It was time to get serious about copyrighting. It was a different world...and an expensive one to copyright each story. The solution (which most professional storytellers already knew) was to put a collection of one's stories in print. A whole book of stories protected with one copyright. Simple. Done. Reasonable cost. I became a published author.

The next rule that I had to figure out the hard way was: don't mix stories of fact with stories of fiction. It drives people crazy. It is hard for sellers and publishers to categorize. It is hard for buyers and readers to find. But storytellers are a diverse lot. Most storytellers embrace multiple genres. So I guess that is what makes *Tiggy Tiggy Touch Wood* unique – it is the only hybrid collection of stories on my bookshelf!

Of course, that was years ago. Although it is still one of my favorite books with some of my favorite stories, it was time for a revision. My cover illustrator had retired, but I am blessed to have a talented member of my own family who was willing to give it a try. My grandson Jake Deats, a photographer and designer/illustrator for the University of Rochester, created the handsome Celtic-style cover you see here. Hats off to you, Jake. You did a great job!

Next issue: I don't write the same today as I did in 2014, so a text revision for print and ebook was in order. We went a step further by offering it as an audio book. It was not my first audio book narration, and perhaps my voice was not as strong as it was in 2020 with narrating *Touched by Tennessee*, but we did it, thanks to my tried-and-true recording studio in Elizabethton TN, Blue River Studio LLC. Owner Tom Hitchcock is a true professional in his field and made it happen, even from 750 miles away. Thank you, Tom!

Here is ordering information for the 2025 edition of *Tiggy Tiggy Touch Wood*:

Print ISBN: 979-8-9928646-0-1

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-9928646-1-8

Audio book: Amazon ASIN: B0FJYJBFXR

Madefyn's Musings

We often learn about events in history centered around a main person – the notable ones like the midnight ride of Paul Revere, George Washington crossing the Delaware, and so many others. What we seldom hear about are the secondary people who played an important part in the event...perhaps even causing it to happen. Here is such a story – one that I was honored to be able to tell in September 2014 for the event's 200th anniversary. You probably know the story by its main character, but knowing what led up to it and who else was involved might give you a deeper appreciation for the significance of the event. The story itself is ever-lasting because of the action of the main person, and rightfully so, but there were others involved...other brave men who have faded into the blurry background of history. I hope you enjoy "the rest of the story."

The Battle for Baltimore

It was late August of 1814, and The War of 1812 was heading into its third year. Dr. William Beanes was sitting in front of an outbuilding on his large estate in the rural countryside of Upper Marlboro, Maryland with several of his friends, enjoying some "Maryland tea" while waiting for the British army to arrive. He was an elderly doctor (65 at the time), well known, loved, and respected. As a younger physician in his 20's, he had tended to wounded soldiers during the Revolutionary War. Now, many

years later, he was doing the same thing in a new war.

Besides being a medical doctor, Beanes wore several other hats. He was a large landowner, a successful businessman (he owned a local mill), and was involved in his community and government. Of all these things, however, he was a doctor first. And as he did during the Revolutionary War and was doing again now, he tended to wounded soldiers, both American and British. He cared about them individually as human beings who needed attention, regardless of which side of the war they were on.

As anticipated, the British army did arrive and were surprised to find anyone home. Usually when the British army was on the move, homeowners who were in their path vacated their homes and got out of the way. The Brits were used to choosing any property they wished for overnight encampments and helping themselves to supplies. Dr. Beanes' home was in their path; General Ross chose it for their overnight stop.

Beanes did not resist. He politely offered to move his family to the guest house and turn his home and grounds over to the general. Ross was pleased with the hospitality of the amiable doctor, settled his army on the grounds, and used the house for himself and his officers. But Beanes had two reasons for not abandoning his property. First, a personal reason: his presence might discourage ransacking or destruction of his property. Second: all of the important legal documents of Baltimore and the State of Maryland were hidden on his estate – buried in boxes near the outbuilding, right under the area where he and his friends regularly met to discuss matters of business and government.

The army stayed the night, breaking camp early the next morning to continue to their destination: Washington DC. They captured Washington, looted and burned the capitol building, executive mansion (later called the White House), other government buildings, and private homes. They left a path of destruction, then returned the way they came, once more arriving at Beanes' house to overnight.

When they left this time, however, six British stragglers (deserters) stayed behind. They decided it was more enjoyable to continue looting and taking what they wanted from vacant homes rather than being in the army, camping out, and maybe getting shot at.

It didn't take long for Beanes and his friends to realize what they were up to. The looters were rounded up, arrested, charged with "disturbing the peace," and put in jail. But one of them escaped. He

made his way back to the army and told the general that he and his friends were captured and put in jail for no other reason than they were at the tail end of the army as it departed.

The general believed him and was furious, feeling he had been duped by the kindly doctor. He sent soldiers back and arrested Beanes and his friends in the middle of the night. They were hauled to the general's headquarters aboard the flagship of the British fleet on Chesapeake Bay. They tried to explain to Ross what really happened, but he wasn't buying it. He eventually let the others go but kept Beanes to be court marshaled, most likely to be found guilty, and probably shot or hanged.

Returning to their homes, Beanes' friends knew they had to do something to save him, but what? They couldn't take on the British army by themselves. They decided their best option was to do it legally.

It was early September when there was a knock on the door of a local (Georgetown) attorney named Francis Scott Key. Would he help them obtain the release of their friend? Key had never met Beanes but had heard about him. Yes, he was a good man and yes, he would try.

Key enlisted the help of John Skinner, U.S. Prisoner Exchange Agent for the region. The two men rented a small ship, hoisted the flag of truce, and set out for the flagship of the British fleet and hopefully a meeting with General Ross.

They were taken aboard and presented their case, but Ross would not budge; he was determined to put Beanes on trial. But Skinner had Plan B. He handed Ross a packet of envelopes from British prisoners of war who wrote about how well they were being treated by their American captors and especially how well they were treated medically by a Dr. Beanes. Ross said he would read them if he had time...and he did. He realized that yes, he had indeed been duped, but not by Beanes. He released Beanes to the custody of Key and Skinner and they were allowed to get back on their boat...but they couldn't leave. They were tied to a large British ship and it was to remain tied. Why? Because it was believed that they had seen too much!

The British were obviously making plans for a battle. Troops were being amassed; supplies were being brought in. It didn't take much imagination to realize the target – Baltimore, America's third largest city. The leaders of Baltimore had already anticipated it, which was why all of Baltimore's legal papers were given to Beanes for safekeeping on his estate. If the British captured Baltimore, they

would have control of a large section of the East Coast.

But to get to Baltimore, they had to take Fort McHenry, located at the entrance to Baltimore Harbor on the Patapsco River. General Ross did not see this as a problem. After all, they just took Washington DC, which was a lot larger than Fort McHenry.

The officer in charge of Fort McHenry, Major Armistead, was also prepared for the anticipated attack, whether by land or water. He had ordered two American flags for the fort – a garrison flag and a storm flag. The garrison flag was huge. The U.S. had 15 states at the time so there were 15 stars, each one 2 feet across from tip to tip. Each stripe was 2 feet tall – eight red ones and 7 white ones. The finished flag was 30 feet tall and 42 feet wide and was hoisted on a 90-foot pole. The storm flag was a little smaller – 17 feet tall by 25 feet wide.

Armistead wanted the garrison flag to be so big that the British would have no trouble seeing it from a long distance away because they weren't going to get close! He wanted the flag to send a message:

This is where we are!

This is who we are as Americans!

This is what we stand for!

Armistead knew the British cannons were good for 2 miles so, a little further away than 2 miles, he sank a row of ships across the Patapsco River. American ships could go over the sunken chain of ships, but the British ships could not as they sat deeper in the water.

The Battle of Baltimore started with a ground attack on September 12, but the British army was met with a fierce resistance. Ross was killed by a sniper. The army called for naval support.

Naval bombardment started at 6:30 a.m. the next day and would continue for 25 hours. Beanes, Key, and Skinner watched the battle from 8 miles away, their small boat still tied to a British ship. Key was the youngest of the three and could climb higher than the other two. He had a telescope and was able to see the garrison flag...until a heavy rain storm came up. Armistead had the garrison flag taken down and the storm flag raised.

Bombardment stopped during the storm but resumed when the storm passed. Key once again kept sporadic watch from his loftier height but, in the darkness, could not tell if the flag was American or British. He could only see that it was "different."

"Is our flag still there, Frances?" Beanes continually asked him.

The only answer he could give was “I don’t know William; I can’t tell.”

The British artillery was inferior. Rockets fired at the fort during the night left a red trail (the rockets’ red glare). They were supposed to explode on impact but exploded before they got to their targets (bombs bursting in air).

Later that night, Armistead had the garrison flag raised again. As morning broke (at dawn’s early light), Key could finally answer Beane’s anxious question: “Yes, William. Our flag is still there!”

At 7:30 a.m. on September 14, the British withdrew; taking Baltimore was proving too costly. Their ship was cut loose. Beanes, Key and Skinner were free to leave.

Frances Scott Key was so inspired by what he had witnessed that he pulled an envelope from his pocket and wrote a poem called “Defense of Fort McHenry” (later renamed “The Star Spangled Banner”).

Back on land, Beanes’ faithful friends were waiting to take him home. Key took his poem to a printer, had copies run off, and distributed them the next day to all the brave souls at Fort McHenry – then all around Baltimore and beyond.

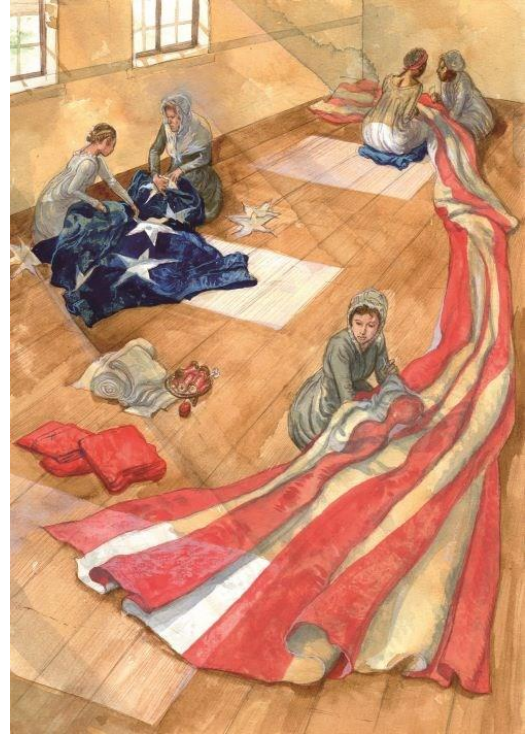
But Frances was not a musician; he was actually tone deaf. However...it did fit well to an old English drinking song called “Anacreon in Heaven.” But the tune didn’t matter. The words said it all. They came from the heart of a witness to one of the most important battles in our country’s history. They spoke of the courage and tenacity of those who fought to keep Baltimore and our country free from foreign rule.

And so our national anthem was born, as was the very first “star spangled banner,” as named by Frances Scott Key.

The first “Star Spangled Banner”

The only place in Baltimore large enough to make the two flags commissioned by Major Armistead for Fort McHenry was the malt floor of a local brewery. The project took a little over six weeks during June, July and August of 1813. The pieces were constructed and sewn together by Mary Pickersgill, a local seamstress from Baltimore, plus her daughter, two nieces, and a young black girl named Grace Wisher. The garrison flag used more than 400 yards of English wool bunting and more

than one million stitches. Mrs. Pickersgill was paid \$574.44 for her work.



After the War of 1812, the garrison flag remained in the possession of Major George Armistead's family where it stayed for generations. Unfortunately, small pieces of the historic flag disappeared through the years, possibly cut off as souvenirs or tokens of gratitude from the Armistead family. In 1907 it was loaned to the Smithsonian, then gifted to them in 1912. Today it is on permanent display in a climate-controlled environment of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

America’s National Anthem

*O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*