

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

Hail, Columbia

PHILIP PHILE AND JOSEPH HOPKINSON

Page | 1

This song was composed by German-American composer and musician Philip Phile (c. 1734–93) for the first inauguration of George Washington, in 1789. Nine years later, Joseph Hopkinson (1770–1842), a Philadelphia lawyer and future Congressman and judge—as well as son of the patriot Francis Hopkinson, who signed the Declaration of Independence—penned words for the already famous musical composition. Approached by Gilbert Fox, a local actor and singer who wanted to sing the song at an upcoming concert, Hopkinson wrote the poem overnight and gave it to Fox the next day. The rendition was an immediate success, and President John Adams caught the show a few nights after its opening.

For most of the nineteenth century, the song was used as the unofficial national anthem of the United States, and is currently used as the entrance march for the Vice President of the United States. What is this song primarily about? What does it celebrate? What is the meaning of the title? Beginning in the early eighteenth century, the European colonies in America became known as “Columbia,” after the man who opened the New World for settlement by the Old. Does the poet—do you—see any connection between Columbus and Columbia, and between both and George Washington and the nation he was being inaugurated to lead?

For a musical rendition of this song, see: <http://youtu.be/JPlQS1pzHdA>.

Hail Columbia, happy land!
Hail, ye heroes, heav'n-born band,
Who fought and bled in freedom's cause,
Who fought and bled in freedom's cause,
And when the storm of war was gone
Enjoy'd the peace your valor won.
Let independence be our boast,
Ever mindful what it cost;
Ever grateful for the prize,
Let its altar reach the skies.

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

(Chorus)

Firm, united let us be,
Rallying round our liberty,
As a band of brothers joined,
Peace and safety we shall find.

Page | 2

Immortal patriots, rise once more,
Defend your rights, defend your shore!
Let no rude foe, with impious hand,
Let no rude foe, with impious hand,
Invade the shrine where sacred lies
Of toil and blood, the well-earned prize,
While off'ring peace, sincere and just,
In Heaven's we place a manly trust,
That truth and justice will prevail,
And every scheme of bondage fail.

(Chorus)

Firm, united let us be,
Rallying round our liberty,
As a band of brothers joined,
Peace and safety we shall find.

Behold the chief who now commands,
Once more to serve his country stands.
The rock on which the storm will break,
The rock on which the storm will break,
But armed in virtue, firm, and true,
His hopes are fixed on Heav'n and you.
When hope was sinking in dismay,
When glooms obscured Columbia's day,
His steady mind, from changes free,
Resolved on death or liberty.

(Chorus)

Firm, united let us be,
Rallying round our liberty,

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

As a band of brothers joined,
Peace and safety we shall find.

Sound, sound the trump of fame,
Let Washington's great name
Ring through the world with loud applause,
Ring through the world with loud applause,
Let ev'ry clime to freedom dear,
Listen with a joyful ear,
With equal skill, with God-like pow'r
He governs in the fearful hour
Of horrid war, or guides with ease
The happier time of honest peace.

(Chorus)

Firm, united let us be,
Rallying round our liberty,
As a band of brothers joined,
Peace and safety we shall find

Page | 3