Given the rich history of patriotic music even as early as the 1840s, it is no surprise that reformers like the Hutchinson family or the Washingtonians would have eagerly appropriated music from disparate sources: ranging from minstrel tunes to the well-worn patriotic favorites that were familiar to all. Both kinds of music could be subsumed under the banner of perfectability; the diverse panoply of musical culture, commercial and otherwise, made this possible. Even as these musical genres represented different visions of national identity, they each utilized the full range of patriotic celebratory practices. If the brass band revolution was the apotheosis of the patriotic sublime, music in reform movements was that sublimity put to the test and emerging battered but intact. By the early 1840s, the patriotic sublime had been fully articulated and suffused American culture. It would be tested again just a few years later as Americans confronted the prospect of actual war: a challenge, as they saw it, not faced since the stars and stripes flew over Fort McHenry in 1814.
The Independent Blues and Independent Greys, the volunteer militia companies from Baltimore, participated in a short but important excursion on the Fourth of July, 1848, along with their bands: they made the short journey south to Washington, D.C. to participate in the festivities surrounding the laying of the cornerstone for the Washington Monument, the looming monolith that stands at the center of the National Mall today. Several companies from Baltimore, including the Blues and Greys, as well as the Maryland Cadets, joined the procession from City Hall to the plain that would later become the Mall. Some of their fellows had volunteered for service in the war with Mexico, but there were still plenty of militiamen to make a fine show.

The press remarked on the brass bands of the Blues and Greys: “their performances were received with high applause.” Music, marching, and patriotic symbols were the order of the day for the “war-like” volunteers, who carried many “national flags,” and for other groups like the fire company that held aloft the “Star-Spangled
Banner.” No less impressive was “the army of temperance men…an immense body of the ‘bone and sinew’ of their country.” The junior auxiliaries of the temperance associations “carried their flags and banners, and marched as regularly to the music as did many of the seniors.” The procession was a “mighty multitude…all animated by the same spirit.”

News of a peace treaty with Mexico had reached the capital just that afternoon. The daylong festivities, venerating the greatest figure of the nation’s past and the successful consummation of its imperial present, indicated that the patriotic sublime was as strongly felt as ever.

The war with Mexico had stemmed from America’s annexation of Texas in 1845, and more generally from the nation’s eagerness for expansion across the continent. James Polk accelerated the imperialist push for new land (acreage for settlers and their cash crops, especially cotton) that had characterized his mentor Andrew Jackson’s spoliation of native lands and acquisition of Florida in the previous two decades: America’s “Manifest Destiny,” a phrase coined by a percipient newspaperman. Polk, desiring territory further west, especially California, cleverly wielded the Texas annexation as a goad to provoke Mexico into armed conflict; he succeeded in April 1846, using skirmishes between Mexican forces and Zachary Taylor’s small army, comprised mostly of regular army soldiers, near the Mexico-Texas border town of Matamoros as a pretext for war.

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1 All quotations in this paragraph from the Baltimore Sun, July 6, 1848.
A surge of bellicose patriotism accompanied the beginning of the war. Herman Melville described the scene in small-town New York as “a state of delirium about the Mexican War. A military order pervades all ranks…’prentice boys are running off to the war by scores. – Nothing is talked of but the ‘Halls of the Montezumas.’”\(^3\) To be sure, abolitionists and other political and ideological opponents of the Polk administration who objected to the territorial expansion of slavery dissented from the War.\(^4\) Still, antiwar sentiment was not the norm: the “national mood,” as one historian has described it, was “adventuresome and aggressive,” as many Americans voiced their support for the war by volunteering and through patriotic display.\(^5\)

An influx of volunteer soldiers, who played a crucial role in the war effort, strengthened Zachary Taylor’s army, which defeated Mexican forces at Monterrey and Cerro Gordo in 1846-47, while U.S. forces besieged and captured Veracruz on the Gulf Coast in early 1847 after an amphibious invasion, one of the first of its kind in history. The war ended with the capture of Mexico City in September 1847. It lasted two years and by some measurements was the most lethal in U.S. history: one American soldier out of every ten engaged died during its course.\(^6\) More than twice as many volunteers served in Mexico as regular army soldiers: the intense burst of patriotism that greeted the declaration of war was accompanied by a rush of military volunteers. They brought to the

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\(^3\) Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 69-70. Cunliffe also quotes a visiting British military officer who commented on the “intense passion for soldiering” of Americans, who were “passionately fond of military display and the profession of arms” (70). See also Bauer, *Mexican War*, 69.


\(^5\) Schroeder, *Mr. Polk’s War*, 33-34.

field of battle some of the social assumptions of the peacetime volunteer militia
companies: they were drawn largely from the same middle class and elite cadres that
supplied peacetime volunteer militias, and tended to look down on working class,
immigrant regular army enlisted men, resenting the harsh discipline required of the army
as a whole.\textsuperscript{7} They also brought with them the musical practices that characterized the
peacetime patriotic sublime.

America’s belligerence toward Mexico was sustained by the democratization of
the patriotic sublime, and war victories occasioned ardent displays of it by soldiers on the
battlefield and by civilians on the home front. Americans conceived of their newly
powerful country as an object of

love and reverence….We love the \textit{American union} -- and we love every thing
connected with its history that tends to throw glory and beauty around it….We must
have national paintings, national songs, national celebrations, to excite and perpetuate
national enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{8}

This ode to national unity was occasioned by the hoisting of the “STAR SPANGLED
BANNER” in an incident in Mexico City more than a decade before the war, and it
nicely defines the patriotic sublime. Patriotism was a feeling, an impassioned
appreciation of the “glory and beauty” of the “\textit{American Union}” and everything

\textsuperscript{7} Winders, \textit{Mr. Polk’s Army}, 71; 81-83; Amy S. Greenberg, \textit{A Wicked War}, 130. It is worth noting that
tension between volunteers and regulars was not universal. The young Ulysses S. Grant, for one, praised
the conduct and fighting qualities of the volunteers, and noted the efficiency of Zachary Taylor’s
amalgamated force. See Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant}, vol. I (New York, 1894), chaps. 3-5. See
also James M. McCaffrey, \textit{Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-

\textsuperscript{8} This ode originated in Charleston, South Carolina, and was reprinted as part of an approving editorial in
Cincinnati, and then finally printed again in Hezekiah Niles’ Baltimore periodical. \textit{Niles’ Weekly Register},
May 11, 1833.
associated with it, including “national song.” It was also a communal sentiment that created a united “We” out of attachment to the nation.⁹

The “star spangled banner” remained a central symbol of the patriotic sublime, and an emblem of victory, martial bravery, and patriotism. In 1846, news of the clash at Matamoros and subsequent declaration of war drew a crowd to Lafayette Square in New Orleans accompanied by the flying of the “star spangled banner,” cannon fire, and an impromptu recruitment of volunteers.¹⁰ In Baltimore, a show at the Columbian Garden featured fireworks meant to represent the sights and sounds of “THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER” and the “BOMBARDMENT OF MATAMOROS.”¹¹ The “Star Spangled Banner” also became the name of a newspaper in Boston and a steamboat in Cincinnati at the start of the conflict.¹²

When the war came, the flag anchored patriotic musical expression and martial sounds to the decades-old narrative of the “star spangled banner” flying over Fort McHenry. Correspondents at the battlefront even echoed closely in their reporting the narrative (and the sentiments) of Francis Scott Key’s original lyric. The “scene” during the bombardment of Veracruz, for example, was “sublime and awe-inspiring” with its “flashes of light” and “booming reverberation of the cannon.” Finally, as at Fort

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¹⁰ Baltimore Sun, May 12, 1846.

¹¹ Baltimore Sun, September 10, 1846.

¹² Tri-Weekly Statesman, Columbus, OH, July 9, 1847. The Boston paper was simply titled “The Star Spangled Banner” and was published from 1846-1857. William Taylot & Co.’s book shop in Baltimore stocked it in 1847; see for example Baltimore Sun, January 8, 1847.

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McHenry, one correspondent also saw at the battle’s end “the Star-Spangled Banner float[ing] from the battlements of the far-famed Castle of San Juan de Uloa.”\(^\text{13}\)

The “star spangled banner” was music as well as symbol: Francis Scott Key’s song was front and center throughout the war. It continued to be a reliable component in celebratory activities like toasts, and musicians performed “The Star Spangled Banner” in cities as far afield as Liverpool, Rome, and Veracruz, near the front lines in Mexico, all to glowing reviews in local newspapers.\(^\text{14}\) The theater in Veracruz, still scarred by shellfire and filled with occupying soldiers, opened just a week after the city’s capitulation to American forces, with a program of Andrew Cherry’s “The Soldier’s Daughter,” an English play with patriotic themes written in 1804 and in regular rotation in American theaters for decades. “The ‘Star Spangled Banner,’ (of course),” was featured in the play, according to a soldier’s report.\(^\text{15}\) Closer to home, citizens wrote new lyrics to the music of “The Star Spangled Banner,” just as Francis Scott Key had done when he borrowed the tune originally from “Anacreon in Heaven.” A celebration of the first settlers of Ohio in Cincinnati featured a new “ode” for the “Buckeye Anniversary,” sung to “The Star Spangled Banner.”\(^\text{16}\) That the ode, with its verses extolling the sacred virtues of both country and region, was approvingly reprinted in Massachusetts speaks to patriotic music’s role in eliding regional difference in favor of Union.

\(^{13}\) Trenton (NJ) State Gazette, April 12, 1847. See also Tom Reilly, \textit{War with Mexico! America’s Reporters Cover the Battlefront} (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010) on battlefield correspondents during the Mexican War.

\(^{14}\) Philadelphia North American, May 7, 1847; Boston Evening Transcript, March 22, 1847; Baltimore Sun, March 24, April 23, 1847; Philadelphia North American, March 24, 1847.


\(^{16}\) Salem (MA) Register, April 25, 1844.
The interconnections among symbol, song, and the martial culture of patriotism were nowhere more evident than in the volunteer militia, now more than ever squarely in the public eye. A band performance in New York during a visit from a Boston militia company (the New England Guards, who made a brief appearance alongside the Maryland Cadets during their 1842 Boston tour) vividly demonstrates the immediacy of the combination of music. Military display, and patriotic sentiment:

Leaving their quarters, early in the day, under escort of their entertainers, the ‘City Guard,’ [the New England Guards] proceeded down Broadway, and in passing the Astor House, stopped to pay a salute to Lt. Stetson of the ‘N.Y. Light Guard,’ … ‘Home, sweet Home’ was played by the N.Y. Band, and ‘Auld Lang Syne’ by the Boston Brass Band. At this moment, the flag was run up from the roof of the house, and floated merrily in the breeze. At this sudden display, the two bands united and played ‘The Star Spangled Banner,’ all together. The effect was stirring to the heart of every listener. The national anthem being over, the military salutes were interchanged, and the battalion proceeded on its way.17

The martial sounds of the “military salutes” followed what was certainly an impromptu performance of “The Star Spangled Banner:” the two bands managed the difficult business of the sudden command performance when someone at the Astor Place Hotel, where Lieutenant Stetson was apparently staying, raised the flag. The symbol had become inextricably entangled with the song and with military display. Finally, the reporter’s effusions about the heart-stirring music placed the reader in a familiar position, witness to the colorful aural and visual display of the proud volunteers on parade.

The militarization of the patriotic sublime was strongly reinforced by reports from the battlefield which also emphasized the importance of music to the soldiers. One recruit in the Baltimore Battalion, comprised of members of various volunteer militias from the city, emphasized the daily presence of music during the Mexican campaign: “the

17 Boston Courier, August 5, 1844.
different beats and calls of each regiment are distinctly heard in our camp, and military
music – drums, fifes, and bands – is sounding at all hours of the day.”

An Ohio volunteer related how the band of a regiment of dragoons “cheered us with the best of
martial music.” Press correspondents traveling with the troops were eager to report on
the daily use of music, whether the field music of fife and drum or the sound of full
bands. Journalist C.M. Haile wrote from camp that “nothing is more stirring than the fife
and drum well played. Half a dozen drums and as many fifes are now ‘discoursing’ merry
music,” while, of the full bands, “the music is soul-stirring enough to open the eyes of the
veriest sluggard in camp.” At Veracruz, the “fightin’ tune” of “Yankee Doodle” was
played as the Americans made their amphibious assault: “everyone’s face paled with
excitement” and “pure unadulterated patriotism flowed at every pulse,” according to one
account.

Reports from Mexico also emphasized the connection between music and the
sounds of war, recalling Francis Scott Key’s bombs bursting in the air. In his war diary,
the young George B. McClellan spoke of the “fine music” of a naval battery.

Correspondent William Tobey made the connection between gunfire and music quite
explicit: “but those shells…make a most enchanting sanguinary sound. He that hears their
music feels that there is death in it, but still will like it; and believe it or not, one often,

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18 John R., Kenly, Memoirs of a Maryland Volunteer: War with Mexico, In the Years 1846-7-8 (Philadelphia, 1873), 234.
20 Tom Reilly, War With Mexico!: America's Reporters Cover the Battlefront, ed. Manley Witten (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 49, 101-102. Haile was the creator of “Pardon Jones,” a Southwestern character who was a regional caricature similar to the “Arkansaw Traveler.” See Edward J. Piacentino, ed., C.M. Haile’s “Pardon Jones” Letters.
21 Johannsen, To the Halls of the Montezumas, 54.
when they have ceased for a time, wishes they would begin again their song of
destruction.” Such descriptions underscored bravery under fire and a sense of war’s
sublimity, a sensibility that had long been reinforced in the culture of the volunteer
militia bands and their auditors, like Tobey.

Tobey also seemed to revel in the patriotic sublime’s glorification of battle, blood,
and death. George McCall, an officer in Zachary Taylor’s force, described the battle at
Resaca de la Palma in front of Matamoros in 1846 as “sublime and beautiful,” soon after
he saw the jaw of one soldier shot off by a cannon shell, and a fellow officer’s “brains
dashed” and splattered by the force of the blast. The sounds of battle were “peculiarly
grand and sublime” to eyewitnesses, and death in battle only added to the terrible
sublimity of war. Another soldier wrote that the ideal death was “at the red-mouthed
cannon, with feet to the foe.” All of these eyewitness descriptions characterized battle
as exciting, echoing Francis Scott Key’s narrative of amped up anxiety as he watched the
bombardment of Fort McHenry.

Courage in the face of these experiences was proof of soldiers’ republican virility
and virtue. The patriotic sublime was by now tightly tied to the hyper-masculine ideals of
the citizen-warrior. Volunteer militiamen bought wholesale into the rhetoric of
masculinity characteristic of Jacksonian Democracy. Their manly valor fitted them for all

23 Reilly, War With Mexico!, 110.
24 Johannsen, To the Halls of the Montezumas, chap 4.
25 George A. McCall, Letters from the Frontiers: Written During a Period of Thirty Years’ Service in the
Army of the United States (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1868), 453.
26 Johannsen, To the Halls of the Montezumas, 85, 102; see also Christopher D. Dishman, A Perfect
Gibraltar: The Battle for Monterrey, Mexico, 1846 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010),
163; Frederick Zeh, William J. Orr, Robert Ryal Miller, eds., Orr, trans., An Immigrant Soldier in the
Mexican War (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 16.
27 Cunliffe, Soldiers and Civilians, 67-69; McCaffrey, Army of Manifest Destiny, 129-130.
the privileges of citizenship in the powerful new United States, and they carried in
Mexico a sense of martial manliness yoked to the crusading cause of Manifest Destiny.28

Patriotic celebration, accompanied by patriotic music, was omnipresent at the
battlefront. The following is a soldier’s description of the Mexican surrender at
Monterrey:

Gen. Worth, with his division, triumphantly marched into the beautiful city of the
True Cross, with the bands playing “Yankee Doodle,” “Star Spangled Banner,” “Hail
Columbia.” The Mexican flags were hauled down and the Stars and Stripes put in
their place, waving in the breeze and saluted by our artillery, which caused great
shouts and cheering among all the soldiers and sailors.29

This victory ritual and its eyewitness account, which detailed the music, the martial
sound of cannon fire, and the visual impact of the flag, was a close parallel of ritual
celebrations (and the reporting of them) back home—civic celebrations which were
themselves reenactments of the look and sound of battle. The battlefront rituals and their
descriptions were replicated many times during the war.

In fact, the elaborate pageantry of peacetime festivities seemed to have created
expectations about what should happen during war. Some observers were even a little
disappointed by the lack of pomp. One witness of a victory celebration complained that
“there was not ceremony enough in raising” the flag, even though the “band of the 8th

28 Toby L. Ditz, “Afterword: Contending Masculinities in Early America,” in Thomas A. Foster, ed., New
Men: Masculinity in Early America (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 256–258; Paul Foos, A
Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War (Chapel

29 J. Jacob Oswandel, Notes of the Mexican War, 1846–47–48 (Philadelphia, 1885), 99. Oswandel also
describes the string of celebrations as his unit made its way along the Ohio River after war’s end,
emphasizing the “roar of artillery” at Cincinnati, where he asked rhetorically, “who wouldn’t be a soldier of
the Mexican War?” See 592–596. John R. Kenly, a captain in the Baltimore Battalion, noted in his memoirs
a similar scene when American troops marched into Victoria the previous year, including the raising of a
flag “selected from our battalion [which] was hoisted amid the music of all the instruments in our
command, playing ‘Hail Columbia’ and the ‘Star Spangled Banner.’” See Kenly, Memoirs of a Maryland
Volunteer, 192.
infantry” played the ‘Star-Spangled Banner,’ and the field music ‘Yankee Doodle.’” He grumbled that “troops should have been paraded under arms” and that “a national salute should have proclaimed…‘Liberty and Union, now and forever’ now that the troops had ‘advanced to the banks of the Rio Grande.’”

Entrepreneurs at home were quick to seek profit from the exploits of war. This was especially true of the sheet music business, which by the mid-1840s was in the midst of explosive growth to fulfill the rapidly increasing demand for inexpensive printed popular music. Publishers speedily leveraged the reports of American exploits during the war into lavishly illustrated sheet music numbers, often printed in multiple locations thanks to increasingly integrated communication networks and the growth of multi-city publishing houses. The publisher W.C. Peters, for example, wandered from Pittsburgh to Louisville and then to Cincinnati, and finally to Baltimore, opening music stores, piano parlors, and publishing branches in all of these cities. (By 1851, he was based permanently in Cincinnati, which by that time had become the central hub of music publishing in the West.) In 1847, his Cincinnati branch published “Santa Anna’s Retreat from Cerro Gordo,” a piece for piano “taken from a celebrated Scotch melody,” and a quickstep that purported to represent in music the Mexican general’s ignominious repulse from the field, including the moments where he loses his “wooden leg” and “Mexican Hat” as he retreated (Figure 6.1). In addition to making Santa Anna appear ridiculous, the

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32 Peters printed a version of the “Arkansaw Traveler” and a large volume of church music (advertising himself as a leading music publisher for Catholics), and also instrumental music from European composers. See Osborne, Music in Ohio, 511-513; Sanjek, American Popular Music and Its Business, 129-131; C. Moore, “Masonic Review,” Cincinnati, vol. XI (1854), 128; The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity’s Directory, Baltimore, 1854, 335-337.
Figure 6.1. "Santa Anna's Retreat from Cerro Gordo" (Cincinnati: W.C. Peters, 1847). Lester H. Levy Collection, Johns Hopkins University.
piece claimed to be a reincarnation of the music actually played on the battlefield: it was “as performed by the American bands on that occasion.”

This march was only one of many such patriotic pieces featuring recent military victories published in Cincinnati and other music centers that flooded the market during the war. Examples included “General Scott’s Artillery March” published in Cincinnati and “as performed by the Brass Bands,” and much more martial music celebrating war heroes like Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott. Many pieces featured elaborate depictions of American victories, representing an eyewitness alongside American troops at the heart of the action (Figure 6.2). Increasingly cheap and plentiful sheet music combined visual images and familiar musical styles to reinforce the patriotic sublime for audiences at home.

Theatrical performance also reinforced an imagined connection between patriotic audiences and soldiery. Theater managers during the Mexican War took advantage of American victories to produce spectacle plays replete with music and lavish visuals. Like theatrical reproductions of the bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore theaters during and after the War of 1812, theaters laced together music and visual representations of battle scenes. A New York play called “The Siege of Monterey, or the Triumphs of Rough and Ready,” dramatized battles in Mexico by linking vivid scenes to music. A “Chorus of Soldiers” accompanied “Fort Brown by moonlight” with “our flag float[ing] Proudly.” In the next scene, Zachary Taylor (whose nickname was “Old Rough and

33 “Santa Anna’s retreat from Cerro Gordo” (Cincinnati, Louisville: W.C. Peters, 1847), Box 86, Items 90-91, Levy Collection. The song received at least two printings from Peters: one in Cincinnati and Louisville, the other in those two cities and Baltimore as well. In 1848, the firm published a similar piece, “Santa Anna’s Retreat from Buena Vista. Quickstep,” composed by Stephen Foster, whose initial publisher for some of his most famous pieces was Peters (Levy Collection, JHU, Box 68, Item 110.
34 “Monterey, A National Song,” (New York: Firth & Hall, 1847), Box 4, Item 80, Levy Collection.
Figure 6.2. Sheet Music cover, “Monterey, A National Song,” (New York: Firth & Hall, 1847). Lester H. Levy Sheet Music Collection, Johns Hopkins University.
Ready”) dreams about “The Capture of Monterey” and the “Bombardment of Vera Cruz.” Finally, the “Revielle” (a bugle call) wakes another “Gallant Soldier” as “the mist disperses and discover[s] Fort Brown at break of day.”

Other theaters in New York and Cincinnati produced plays based on the siege of Monterrey during the war, and a reviewer of one such production in New York explicitly connected theater, patriotism, and war:

From the great number of persons that these patriotic spectacles attract to the theatre, it seems that there is quite a taste among the community for all the dangers incident to war and its scenes, and that this taste is not merely a passing one, or one that is satisfied with the mere mimic representation of war, the great number of New Yorkers who have really and bodily gone to the wars…is a most conclusive proof. It has been said, ‘as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined,’ and we really do believe that the amusements of a people have a great deal to do with the formation of their character.

According to this critic, patriotic theater did much more than entertain: it forged a national identity in its audiences based on its craving for war and its “dangers.” “Patriotic spectacles” during wartime accustomed audiences to a militarized version of the patriotic sublime, and even prompted a “great number” to join up for service. Patriotic spectacle at home incited the taste for battle.

The deaths of war heroes also reinforced this militarized version of the patriotic sublime. The February 1847 funeral procession in Baltimore for William H. Watson and Randolph Ridgley, casualties from among the city’s militia volunteers, demonstrates the vividness, immediacy, and scope of the patriotic sublime. “Chivalrous and brave….no renown can be greater than theirs,” the Baltimore Sun intoned sententiously; and their funeral procession was an “occasion marked by all the pomp and circumstance of

35 New York Herald, October 8, 1847.
36 New York Herald, February 3, 1848.
military display."37 As befitted a war that showcased the exploits of the volunteers, their deaths were quickly reported at home, as were the minute details of the voyage of their remains back to Baltimore.38 The death of artillery captain Samuel Ringgold the previous year had occasioned mourning not just in Baltimore but throughout the nation, including sheet music to commemorate his death. A decade later, a Boston firm was still publishing a vocal quartet called the “Death of Ringgold.”39

Watson, Ridgley, and Ringgold all embodied the masculine militia culture that surrounded the mid-century martial valence of patriotism. Watson had not only been commander of the Independent Blues, but also a member of the Columbian Fire Company and the International Order of Odd Fellows, and was at one point elected to the Maryland House of Delegates, while Ridgley and Ringgold, of a younger generation, were scions of respected families.40 All had joined Baltimore’s wartime volunteer regiment, drawn from the city’s volunteer companies that served in Mexico. On the home front, Baltimore’s volunteer militia companies continued all of the activities that had enmeshed martial symbols and practices within the city’s civilian society. Concerts, parades, drills, July Fourth celebrations, and excursions, including, for example, a trip by the Independent Blues’ Band to perform at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, kept the patriotic sublime in public view at home. Winter was the season for military balls, and funeral observances for Watson, Ridgley, and Ringgold took place amidst a

37 *Baltimore Sun*, February 9, 1847.
38 *Baltimore Sun*, December 18, 1846.
39 See for example *Baltimore Sun*, December 22, 1846; *Philadelphia North American*, June 23, 1846; *Bennington (VT) Gazette*, June 23, 1846; and many more. Even the abolitionist press, vehemently opposed to the war and to James Polk’s foreign policy in general, could perpetuate the rapturous narrative of Ringgold’s death even as it criticized that narrative from a theological perspective. See “The Last Words of War’s Dying Saints,” *Emancipator*, Boston, June 24, 1846.
stream of volunteer company fetes, including a massive ball at the Holliday Street
Theatre for the entire 53rd Regiment (including the Maryland Cadets and Independent
Greys) the week before the funeral procession.\(^{41}\)

The scene at the funeral procession for Watson and Ridgley on February 8, 1847
was the apotheosis of the patriotic sublime. It was a public display made possible by a
broadly received and flexible culture of music built up over several decades, and by an
intensification of the martial valence of patriotic sentiment that has continued to resonate
as one mode of patriotism up to the present day. Its tone was set in a eulogy for the
former commander of the Independent Blues:

Watson went forth from amongst us, one of the people; he was familiar to thousands,
his ready smile, the prompt nod of recognition, the hearty grasp of the hand, were
known to the multitude, the masses of his townsmen. They all knew Watson, though
perhaps none of us would have known so well the gallant spirit that dwelt within, but
for the mingled tale of death and victory that came to us from Monterey. Who does
not remember that in the midst of the general joy which burst forth, upon the tidings of
that gallant fight and glorious triumph.\(^{42}\)

Watson himself, presented as a unifying figure, a man of the people, was a symbol for the
unity assumed to follow from the imagination of the “gallant” and “glorious” battle for
which he sacrificed his life. This was an occasion for patriotic celebration, rather than
gloom, much less regret about war. The eulogy presupposed assent to this martial
sublime.

Band music, as usual, was central the pageantry of the procession. The order of
procession was limned with all the colorful and “splendid regalia” of the many militia
companies, fire companies, and other fraternal societies that took part. Spaced out among

\(^{41}\) For 53rd Regiment ball, see *Baltimore Sun*, January 28, February 1, 1847; see also *Baltimore Sun*,
August 16, February 22, September 1, 4, 1845, January 26, April 14, 1846, for examples of other social
events.
\(^{42}\) *Baltimore Sun*, February 9, 1847.
the marchers were no less than six military bands, including the band of the Independent Greys, and the Independent Blues and their band as chief mourners. The latter band was led at this time by Albert Holland.\textsuperscript{43} Holland and Watson (not to mention James Deems, Sol Smith, Lowell Mason, Daniel Decatur Emmett, and the rest of the country’s antebellum musical community) would have endorsed the presence of the many proud bands interspersed in the marching column, as having elevating effects on its members and the public.

The patriotic sublime originating with Francis Scott Key connected music and attachment to the nation to the imagery and sounds of war. The patriotic sublime reached its zenith in the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, and Key likely would have been repelled by the death-loving and triumphalist tenor of the most militarist versions of it. He died in 1843, so did not live to experience the full-throated roar of war supporters in 1846. The United States had become an aggressive continental power, and the militarized patriotic sublime was an expression of this expansionist nationalism. It celebrated virile, martial manhood, revered bloody conflict, and even death in battle as noble.

Patriotic music was (and is) available to different constituencies, including anti-war dissenters. Abolitionists like the Hutchinson family, or anti-war Whigs, could be as moved by “Yankee Doodle” as the soldiers splashing ashore at Veracruz in 1846. Many of the musicians, writers, and audiences who used music to generate patriotic excitement in peacetime America, and labeled the results sublime, were perhaps not fully aware of what the sublime could mean when the United States flexed its imperial muscle in the

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Baltimore Sun}, February 8-9, 1847. If the Washingtonian Temperance Society had been a part of this procession, as they were of many, Holland could also have marched with them: he was a founding member. On Holland, see Scharf, \textit{History of Baltimore City and County}, 369.
crucible of war. Sacral patriotism and elevated or refined national feeling in music easily became a celebration of the bloody virtues of battle, conquest, and even death.

The Mexican-American War cemented the patriotic sublime firmly into place as the dominant emotional valence of American nationalism and its music. By the outbreak of war, the well-integrated print and performance networks that had grown up in the preceding decades rapidly disseminated encomiums of martial virtue, battle narratives, and the music that went with them. The flash and dash of martial parades and patriotic spectacles in American streets and theatres and their reenactments of the mythic present reinforced the association of national feeling with war. It would prove difficult in the future to dislodge the patriotic sublime from its central place in the cultural practices of nationalism.
By 1848, Americans had created a new kind of patriotic sentiment I call the patriotic sublime. It was imagined in musical form by Francis Scott Key when he wrote “The Star Spangled Banner” during the bombardment of Fort McHenry, cemented in place by the elaboration of musical culture during the intervening decades, and brought to full flower during the war with Mexico. I have argued that for many, mostly white, Americans, the patriotic sublime was a commonplace, even normative, way to express patriotism, and that it came to be associated with and intensified by war. When, for example, people performed patriotic songs at concerts, or heard them alongside spectacle plays in theaters, or played them while on the march with volunteer militias companies, they were playing music that ardently expressed national unity, although different constituencies demarcated unity in a variety of ways. In wartime, these expressions were filtered through the evocative sounds and images of battle, making the link between patriotic expression and war strong and lasting.
The importance of music during the Civil War confirmed the resiliency of the patriotic sublime that had been built up during the preceding decades. In 1860, Americans greeted the declaration of war with a flood of patriotic emotion stimulated by music, like the “general outburst of enthusiasm” in Middletown, Connecticut:

Little knots of men had gathered here and there in the forenoon but as the day advanced the crowd grew thicker, and several hundreds were in Main street when the flag was raised from the Custom House. Cheers were given, and the “Star Spangled Banner,” and other national airs were played by the band.

Similar scenes were repeated in cities and towns across the country. “The uprising is universal,” one sermon thundered: “the streets echo to the soldier’s tread, and the strains of martial music.” These strains included “The Star Spangled Banner,” “Hail, Columbia,” “Yankee Doodle,” and later “The Battle Cry of Freedom,” the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and even the minstrel song “Dixie,” composed by Dan Emmett. To these patriotic favorites, both sides added numerous marches, quicksteps, and patriotic pieces in other genres, played by brass bands. The patriotic sublime would survive the great conflict that followed, and has remained ever since a central expression of national identity and unity.

“The Star Spangled Banner” and its dissemination inaugurated for many Americans the mode of the patriotic sublime as the emotional dimension of patriotic practice, taken up through music. During the political brawls of the 1790s, Federalists and Jeffersonians used different patriotic songs to express their partisan positions. At the same time, elite figures like Joseph Hopkinson, author of “Hail, Columbia,” were interested in promoting a national identity based on republican virtues amongst a broad

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1 *The Constitution* (Middletown, CT), April 24, 1861.
poltight, who would, Hopkinson and others thought, be able to identify true patriotism through their refined sensibility, including the emotions that virtuous republican citizens were supposed to feel in the face of sublime images and sounds. Francis Scott Key was part of this project of democratization. With “The Star Spangled Banner,” he added to it vivid imagery and stirring rhythms that placed the performer as an eyewitness to the scene of battle, exemplifying the patriotic sublime in music. It was foreshadowed by earlier examples like “Washington’s March” and “Chester,” but “The Star Spangled Banner” was distinguished by the rapid and widespread dissemination of its battle narrative in print. The steady build up of American musical culture through the first half of the nineteenth century made the employment of the patriotic sublime in lyric and tune both possible and powerful.

To tastemakers like J.S. Dwight or Lowell Mason, social uplift of the mass of citizens was part of a movement toward a refined, civilized society. “National music”, it was thought, marked social progress and national character. The discourse of national music continued the project of refinement begun by people like Joseph Hopkinson and Francis Scott Key. Ironically, the democratization of sensibility and the sublime meant that many Americans played and wrote patriotic music without worrying overmuch about the dictates of elites. For example, Westerners constructed what they considered an exemplar of national character through music: a character that was hard-working, self-reliant, often bumptious, and not overly influenced by the effete civilities of Europe or the East Coast. By incorporating into concerts music of many kinds, including the national music of other cultures like Ireland and Scotland music, musicians and audiences
used the adaptability of musical culture to produce their own versions of the patriotic sublime.

The rise of the patriotic sublime did not occur in a void. It relied on performance venues and the connections forged among them by performers: the networks through which live and printed music traveled. This lattice included civic spaces like streets, public parks, monument sites, and temporary purpose-built places like the Baltimore encampment of 1842. It also included commercial space: theaters, which ranged from permanent edifices like Baltimore’s Holliday Street Theatre, to rudely built wooden structures like the Shellbark Theatre in Cincinnati, and “theatres” that were simply, for example, repurposed taverns or temporary buildings thrown up in a week, like the circuses built by John Durang and company. People played patriotic songs in singing schools and churches, and purchased music and musical instruments in specialty stores and even bookshops to play patriotic music at home. Historians have tended to analyze these places separately as venues for distinct genres of music and types of performance. I have argued instead that by observing the ways these distinct nodes on the musical lattice are connected, we better understand the spread and elaboration of patriotic music and nationalist sentiment.

While genteel white Americans wanted to encourage their particular vision of nationalist sentiment and refined musical taste, the patriotic sublime was propagated by a diverse set of actors between the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War. Traveling performers and theatre impresarios like Sol Smith and Noah Ludlow did much to create this broadly shared culture, as did performers who put down local roots like Joseph Tosso or James Deems. Musical tastemakers like J.S. Dwight, newspaper editors, purchasers of
sheet music, amateur musicians who joined militia bands like the Baltimore Independent Greys, blackface minstrels like Dan Emmett, reformers like the Hutchinson family, and black musicians like Francis Johnson all strengthened the interconnections between musical places. They played and listened to patriotic music in virtually every venue. The patriotic sublime tied together civic space and public celebration with the commercial marketplace, where the patriotic sublime appealed to theater-goers and purchasers of sheet music.

The musical materials used by performers and audiences to assert attachment to nation were part of a common culture, but could be used to advance very different, even antithetical political and moral causes. I argue that the patriotic sublime was internalized even by those who opposed the expansionism and white supremacy it often was in service to: these dissenting groups tried to insist that the republic belonged to black citizens as well as white. Only consider the different uses to which Daniel Decatur Emmett, the Hutchinson Family, and James M. Deems used (for example) popular minstrel tunes. For Emmett and other minstrels, a tune like “Old Dan Tucker” was a vehicle to ridicule African Americans as well as the pretensions of jumped-up white strivers. For the Hutchinsons, it was grist for an antislavery argument that roused fervent emotion. For militia musicians like James Deems, it was appropriated for the patriotic sublime in its martial mode. But unlike Federalists and Jeffersonians in the 1790s, Emmett, the Hutchinsons, and Deems all used the same tune.

The patriotic sublime was then accessible to groups as varied as abolitionists, temperance folk, and black Americans, who all proposed different visions of national unity, and did it through music. They did it through genres of music as varied as
blackface minstrelsy, marching music played by black bands, the spirituals of enslaved African Americans, and the regional music of the West, all of which incorporated the musical sublime. These worlds referred to nationalist stereotypes even as they mocked them: the clever and self-reliant Westerner, for example, or the proud, nattily-attired militiamen tipped over into satire by Jim Brown.

Civic celebrations and commercial entertainments that centered on militia bands and an array of patriotic insignia elaborated the patriotic sublime in the context of a “mythic present:” rituals which confirmed that the brave, virile soldiery of the new republic had inherited the martial virtues of the heroes of the Revolutionary past, and would continue to embody their courageous deeds into the imperial future. Martial music ratified America’s Manifest Destiny. The militia band was the single most important phenomenon in generating expressions of patriotic sentiment recognized by all Americans. It combined familiar military music, like the field music of the fife and drum, with a technological revolution in new kinds of brass instruments. These new instruments and their colorful, powerful sonorities were central to the musical expression of the patriotic sublime. The martial culture of the volunteer militia and their bands fueled the national sentiment that made imperial adventures, such as the invasion of Mexico in 1846, politically possible, even in the face of opposition.

In 1847, the eulogist at the Baltimore funeral procession for William Watson and Randolph Ridgley presupposed assent to the martial sublime and its exaltation of the sights and sounds of war. Even death in battle was glorified. Antiwar constituencies would subvert such messages, then and always. The tug of war between groups who consider patriotism to require assent to state-sanctioned warfare and those who believe it
is patriotic to question those national policies has been a characteristic of American
culture throughout its modern history. Still, the martial valence given the patriotic
sublime by the time of the Mexican-American War would represent the default position
for many, perhaps the majority, of Americans in the nation’s conflicts, and in peacetime.
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Curriculum Vita

James Jackson Ashton was born February 13, 1974 in Lubbock, Texas. He grew up in Detroit, Michigan and Cincinnati, Ohio and attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History in 1996. His subsequent career in not-for-profit arts management included a Master of Arts in Arts Administration from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, as well as a Master of Business Administration from the University of Cincinnati, both in 2001. It also spurred his interest in the culture of the arts and its history. After receiving a Master of Arts in history from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia in 2009, Ashton entered the Ph.D. program in history at Johns Hopkins University under the direction of Dr. Toby L. Ditz, also working with Dr. Ronald Walters as a secondary advisor.

Ashton has been the recipient of several fellowships and grants, including a Dissertation Write-Up Fellowship, the Richard P. Longaker Endowment Fellowship, and the Hodson Fellowship in the Humanities from Johns Hopkins University, and the Lord Baltimore Fellowship from the Maryland Historical Society. He has presented his research at the Maryland Historical Society and at national conferences sponsored by the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic and the Consortium on the Revolutionary Era. Ashton is a part-time faculty member at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where he has taught classes on the cultural history of music in nineteenth-century America. He is also an affiliate faculty member of the Center for Africana Studies at Johns Hopkins University, where he has taught a class on African American history and culture, and an affiliate faculty member at Loyola University Maryland.