

Broad Stripes and Bright Stars

Act Two

Video online at: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/Videos/Stars2.asx>

Codes:

A = Actor (Mary Pickersgill)

“ “ =interrupting, pause

[] = not speaker's words

A = I have been commissioned to create a new garrison flag for Fort McHenry. I suppose my family has always found itself in some way or another in service to the country. When father died during the revolution at Allentown, my uncle, Colonel Flower, took us to live with him and his wife in Philadelphia. He was Commissary General to the military stores, and he soon had my mother helping to make things for the Army. Whether it was musket balls or blankets, mother relished the opportunity to serve. Eventually, we moved to our own home and mother began to advertise the taking in of boarders and the making of flags. It is through her that I learned the trade of flag making. Mother made flags, banners, standards for both the army and the navy. In fact, Mother was the only flag maker to actually advertise during the revolution. This put her at a great advantage over the numerous other seamstresses and upholsterers in Philadelphia of the day; particularly those that had political connections such as a certain Mrs. Elizabeth Ross. Mother even had the great honor and privilege of making flags for none other than General George Washington. Yes, well it is upon the strength of her reputation during the revolution and afterwards that Commodore Barney and General Striker came to my humble abode a short time ago and requested that we make these flags for Fort McHenry. Well, though I grew up watching and working with my mother, I had no intention of becoming a flag maker myself. Oh, no, no. I had dreams of home, husband, children, and a long happy comfortable life together. Oh yes, I had other plans, but my only surviving child is Caroline, my daughter. And, my husband John, he left us as well quite suddenly eight years ago. I, too, found myself a woman

alone in need of a way to support her family so we packed our things and moved to Baltimore. I found myself in the prime position to garner commissions from the incoming ships to the harbor, and you do know what they say about Baltimore don't you? It's our own little nest of pirates. Yes. Well, I'm certain I don't need to tell you this late war is affecting everything. You know some people are referring to it as our second war of independence. I think that gives the British far too much credit, and I should know, I married an Englishman. Who would've thought in these most modern days of 1813, it would be nearly impossible to come by even the most common of amenities. There's no sugar to be had. Flour is in scarce supply, and I don't know when anyone has had new material for gowns. As with the blockades and the shortages, it has brought new challenges and opportunities. Major Armistead has proposed the commission of a mammoth garrison flag to be flown ninety feet above Fort McHenry and an accompanying storm flag to be used in battle. I was greatly honored to have been chosen for this task, but when I discovered I was allotted but six weeks for the project, my delight turned to fear. I took a deep breath and gathered my thoughts. First, where was I to find the nearly four hundred yards of wool bunting required for a flag of this size with materials in scarce supply? I turned to my brother-in-law. He has proven of great use in the endeavor. Some have inferred he, in fact, may be a member of that nest of privateers, but I prefer to think of him as an ingenious man with a talent for finding things when others cannot. He found what I needed and I was on my way, and all of that brings me to where I am today.