

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **As Gettysburg Was**

The historic shrine of Gettysburg belongs to the American people. Several generations of owners of the undeveloped lands surrounding the battlefield have preserved these areas just as the government preserved the surrounding areas that it acquired. It has come as a matter of surprise to many, as well as to congressmen and visitors, that these strategically located areas were not government owned, they have been so perfectly cared for throughout the years.

The New York Times reports this: "The \$750,000, appropriation asked of Congress is a small price to pay to protect the 3,000 acres owned by the United States Government, which now constitutes the Gettysburg National Military Park. Likewise, it is a small price to pay to preserve the 400-odd acres for future generations that for the past 96 years have been preserved as they were in 1863, when they were savagely fought over by American battalions in Blue and Gray"

The plans are being formulated and a sign has been placed on one of these sites announcing "Construction ahead - wonderland and miniature golf course within sight of Gettysburg National Cemetery and Lincoln Speech Memorial. Coming here soon, Fantasyland, a fabulous Magical Wonderland of Make Believe."

Patrick Henry once said, "There is no way of judging the future except by the past." The men in Blue and in Gray who fought at Gettysburg put service above self and served their day as they saw their duty. Acquisition by the government of these privately owned acres in the heart of the Gettysburg National Military Park, which remains almost exactly as two American armies saw them in 1863, is virtually a duty if we are to follow Lincoln's admonishment ". . . never to forget what they did here."

Tradition was broken briefly on Saturday, July 4, in Frederick, Md, when, amid appropriate ceremonies, the American Flag, which, by custom, is never lowered from its standard over the grave of Francis Scott Key, was removed. The author of "The Star Spangled Banner," was a native of Frederick, and since 1898, when the monument in his honor was unveiled at his grave in Mount Olivet Cemetery, the flag has flown night and day in all kinds of weather.

Now it has been taken down, in an unusual Independence Day ceremony, so that the new 49-star flag, which became legal that day, could be raised in its place.

The custom of displaying the flag by night as well as by day over Scott's grave was formalized by Congress in 1942 as an exception to the general recommendation that the flag is to be flown from dawn to sunset. This is in recognition of the National Anthem's lines that the flag's "broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous night, were so gallantly streaming." This was at Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor during the British bombardment, which Key observed during the War of 1812.

Fort McHenry also flies the "flag by night as do the National Capitol in Washington and the World War Memorial at Worcester, Mass.

The grave of Barbara Frietchie, heroine and namesake of John Greenleaf Whittier's famous poem is very near to that of Francis Scott Key. Most famous lines of this poem are: "Shoot if you must, this old gray head, but spare your country's flag." she said.