

## **My Country, 'Tis of Thee**

Samuel Francis Smith was a twenty-four-year-old Baptist seminary student in Massachusetts when he wrote the lyrics of “America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee),” the patriotic song that would serve as an unofficial national anthem for nearly one hundred years.

In 1831, while studying at Andover Theological Seminary, Smith was asked by composer Lowell Mason to translate some German song books. Inspired by one of the German songs—“God Bless Our Native Land” (set to the tune of “God Save the King”)—Smith set out to write an original patriotic song for America set to the same melody. The result was what Smith called “America” and what would eventually be better known as “My Country, 'Tis of Thee.” The song was first performed on July 4, 1831, by a children’s choir in Boston.

*The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2012*