

You're A Grand Old Flag

George M. Cohan, 1906

1. There's a feeling comes a-stealing,
And it sets my brain a-reeling,
When I'm list'ning to the music of a military band.
Any tune like "Yankee Doodle"
Simply sets me off my noodle,
It's that patriotic something that no one can understand.
"Way down South, in the land of cotton,"¹
Melody untiring,
Ain't that inspiring?
Hurrah! Hurrah! We'll join the jubilee!²
And that's going some, for the Yankees, by gum!³
Red, White and Blue, I am for you!
Honest, you're a grand old flag!

Chorus

You're a grand old flag,
You're a high-flying flag,
And forever in peace may you wave.
You're the emblem of the land I love,
The home of the free and the brave.⁵
Ev'ry heart beats true
'Neath the Red, White and Blue,⁶
Where there's never a boast or brag.
But should auld acquaintance be forgot,⁷
Keep your eye on the grand old flag.

2. I'm no cranky hanky panky,
I'm a dead square, honest Yankee,
And I'm mighty proud of that old flag that flies for Uncle Sam.
Though I don't believe in raving
Ev'ry time I see it waving,
There's a chill runs up my back that makes me glad I'm what I am.
Here's a land with a million soldiers,

That's if we should need 'em,
We'll fight for freedom!
Hurrah! Hurrah! For ev'ry Yankee Tar,⁴
And old G.A.R., ev'ry stripe, ev'ry star.
Red, White and Blue, hats off to you!
Honest, you're a grand old flag! **Chorus.**

Footnotes

1. Reference to "Dixie".
2. Reference to "Marching Through Georgia."
3. Line taken directly from the previous year's Cohan hit, "The Yankee Doodle Boy".
4. Old fashioned slang for a sailor, a.k.a. "Jack Tar".
5. Reference to "The Star-Spangled Banner."
6. Or "Under Red, White and Blue".
7. Reference to "Auld Lang Syne".

Notes

Cohan wrote this spirited march in 1906 for his stage musical "George Washington, Jr." In addition to obvious references to the flag, it incorporates snippets of other popular songs, including one of his own ("The Yankee Doodle Boy").

According to Cohan, the original lyric came from an encounter he had with a Civil War veteran who fought at Gettysburg. The two men found themselves next to each other and Cohan noticed the vet held a carefully folded but ragged old flag. The man reportedly then turned to Cohan and said, "She's a grand old rag." Cohan thought it was a great line and originally named his tune "You're a Grand Old Rag." So many groups and individuals objected to calling the flag a "rag," however, that he "gave 'em what they wanted" and switched words, renaming the song "You're a Grand Old Flag."

George M. Cohan was already a Broadway star in 1906, but when he introduced an upbeat, patriotic song called "You're a Grand Old Rag" in his new musical George Washington, Jr., he became a nationwide sensation. Soon it was being sung in homes, social clubs, and taverns throughout the U.S. When the nation experienced a surge of patriotism on entering World War I in 1917, "You're a Grand Old Flag" surged with it and became the first song from a musical to sell over a million pieces of sheet music.

Sources

- [You're a Grand Old Flag](#), Wikipedia;
- [You're a Grand Old Flag](#), Library of Congress;
- [You're a Grand Old Flag By George M. Cohan](#), Library of Congress.

Sheet Music



[You're A Grand Old Flag.pdf](#)

[You're A Grand Old Flag-Text.pdf](#)

Performances

- [You're a Grand Old Flag](#) by Billy Murray (1906) (Original lyrics)
- [You're a Grand Old Flag](#) by James Cagney from the movie "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (1942)

Sources

- [You're a Grand Old Flag](#), Wikipedia.
- [You're a Grand Old Flag Sheet Music](#) at Library of Congress