

# Chester (song)

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*Chester* was a patriotic anthem composed by William Billings and sung during the American Revolutionary War. Billings wrote the first version of the song for his 1770 songbook *The New England Psalm Singer*, and made improvements for the version in his *The Singing Master's Assistant* (1778). It is the latter version that is best known today.

The curious title of the song reflects a common practice of Billings's day, in which tunes were labeled with (often arbitrarily chosen) place names. Billings's song evidently has little more to do with any particular town named Chester than his hymn tune Africa has to do with Africa. With identifiable names for compositions, performers could select different lyrics to sing with the music without creating confusion.

## Lyrics

Let tyrants shake their iron rod,  
And Slav'ry clank her galling chains,  
We fear them not, we trust in God,  
New England's God forever reigns.

Howe and Burgoyne and Clinton too,  
With Prescot and Cornwallis join'd,  
Together plot our Overthrow,  
In one Infernal league combin'd.

When God inspir'd us for the fight,  
Their ranks were broke, their lines were forc'd,  
Their ships were Shatter'd in our sight,  
Or swiftly driven from our Coast.

The Foe comes on with haughty Stride;  
Our troops advance with martial noise,  
Their Vet'rans flee before our Youth,  
And Gen'ral's yield to beardless Boys.

What grateful Off'ring shall we bring?  
What shall we render to the Lord?  
Loud Halleluiahs let us Sing,  
And praise his name on ev'ry Chord.