

# **Rossell Galbraith O'Brien**

The Irishman who originated the Custom of Standing for the playing of the Star Spangled Banner (which in 1931 was formally adopted by Congress as the US National Anthem)



Plaque on the Bostwick Building, near the Pantages Theatre in Tacoma, WA.

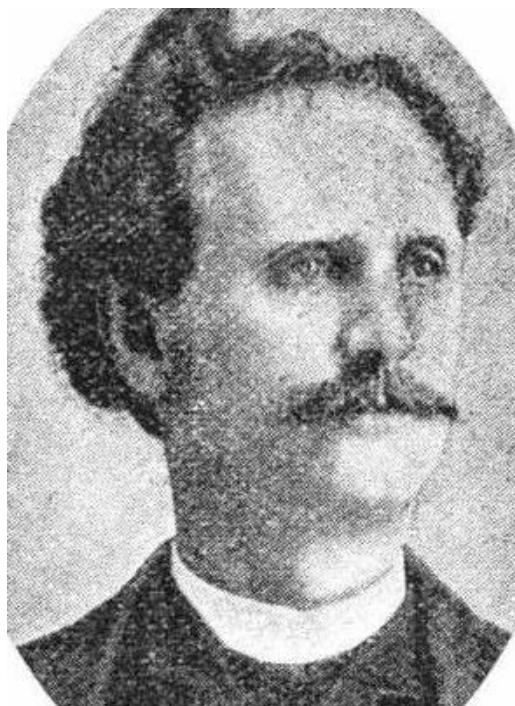
KPLU Radio report: [Tacoma man the reason we stand for Star Spangled Banner](#)

Rossell O'Brien was born in Dublin in 1846, and after coming to the US as a 16-year-old fought in the US Civil War with the Union Army's 134th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. In 1870, he moved to Washington Territory where he served as clerk of the Supreme Court and as United States commissioner. In 1882 he organized the first National Guard in Washington Territory and was its first Commander. He served on the

**Olympia City Council starting in 1883 and was elected Mayor in 1891.**

**He was also involved in the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, an organization of US Civil War veterans. At a meeting in Tacoma's Bostwick Hotel on October 18, 1893, he proposed a motion that all should stand and men remove their hats during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner. The motion was unanimously adopted, and within two years, had also been adopted nationally by the Loyal Legion which promoted the custom nationwide. O'Brien died in 1914 and is buried in Oakland, California.**

**In January 1973 in the US House of Representatives, House Resolution 137 stated "... the late Rossell G. O'Brien, former mayor of Olympia, Washington, is hereby recognized and honored for originating the custom of rising and standing with head uncovered during a rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner, the national anthem of the United States."**



**Rossell G O'Brien**





**O'Brien Grave in Oakland, CA**

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