THE STORY OF OLD GLORY

Long before Old Glory became the symbol of our great nation, there were scores of flags representing the hopes and aspirations of our forefathers. Colonial flags show anchors, beavers, rattlesnakes, pine trees and various other insignia. Some of them bore the words, "Hope," "Liberty," or "An Appeal to Heaven." A favorite motto beneath the rattlesnake design was, "Don't Tread on Me."

The first flag to show a unity of purpose on the part of the colonists consisted of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, typifying the thirteen colonies, with a union bearing the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew combined, signifying the Mother Country. It was known as the Grand Union Flag, sometimes called the Congress Colors, and in addition, was the first Navy ensign.

The Grand Union Flag was first hoisted over our fleet in the Delaware River in December, 1775, and was flown to the breeze at Cambridge, Mass., when the Continental Army came into existence in January, 1776. It floated over forts captured by American bluejackets and marines in the Bahamas in March, 1776; received a salute from a Dutch fort in the West Indies in November of that year, and figured in many other stirring episodes.

But the Grand Union Flag was never formally acknowledged by Congress. It was the Stars and Stripes, which we so often call Old Glory, which was destined to be accorded that honor 157 years ago.

Research has failed to prove definitely just who was responsible for the design of our National Flag. But tradition points to Betsy Ross as the needlewoman whose fingers wrought with loving care the first sample of the Stars and Stripes, which was almost identical with the flag as we know it today.

Late in the spring of 1776 her little shop in Philadelphia was visited by some distinguished patrons. A committee headed by George Washington called on Mrs. Ross and submitted a rough design of a new type of flag in which stars had been substituted for the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew.

The committee was of the opinion that the stars should be six-pointed. But Mrs. Ross, so the story goes, showed them how a five-pointed star could be made with one snip of her scissors, and her suggestion was adopted.

Unfortunately no record of this "first" flag has been preserved. However, Betsy told the story over and over again to her children and grandchildren, and it has been well authenticated by Betsy's descendants.

The flag's first official birthday was June 14, 1777. On that date Congress resolved "That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

Of the first appearance of the new flag there are many accounts and a score of conflicting claims.

Soon after the new design was officially adopted, John Paul Jones was at Portsmouth, N. H., preparing to sail abroad on the Ranger. One naval authority wrote that the young ladies of Portsmouth "wrought out of their own and their mothers' gowns a beautiful Star Spangled Banner, which was flown to the breeze in Portsmouth Harbor, July 4, 1777."

Avery's History records that another hastily improvised Stars and Stripes was used by the defenders of Fort Stanwix, near Rome, N. Y., on August 3, 1777. Captain Swartwout donated a cloak for the blue field, the soldiers gave their shirts for the white stripes, and a soldier's wife donated her petticoat for the red stripes. There are records to show that the Continental Treasury reimbursed Captain Swartwout for the loss of his cloak.

Old Glory first floated over a fortress of the Old World when Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon, of the Marine Corps, and Midshipman Mann, of the Navy, raised the flag over the fortress at Derne, Tripoli, where it was flown to the breeze on April 17, 1805.

"By the dawn's early light" on September 14, 1814, Francis Scott Key saw the Star Spangled Banner still waving over Fort McHenry and composed the song which is now the national anthem.

From time to time slight changes in the flag have been authorized by Congress. Both the flags used at Tripoli and at Fort McHenry had fifteen stars and fifteen stripes, a design that remained in vogue from 1795 until 1818. Then Congress authorized a return of the flag to its original form of thirteen stripes, one star being added thereafter for each State entering the Union.

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It is the custom of the U. S. Marines to raise the flag every morning at eight o'clock. It remains flying until sunset.

Three hours after the Marines at New York, Boston, Norfolk and other east coast naval stations have raised the flag, the Marines at posts along the Pacific seaboard present arms to the colors as they are hauled smartly to the top of the flagstaff—the time interval varying only when daylight saving is in vogue.

About two and a half hours later the ceremony is repeated in the Hawaiian Islands. More than five hours more have rolled around before the flag is raised by the Soldiers of the Sea in the far-off Philippines, and at virtually the same hour the Marines hoist the flag over the American Legation at Peking, China.

Several hours later the western march of daylight catches the fluttering folds of the Stars and Stripes flying over American Consulates in the Near East and in Europe, and when the sun has passed its zenith in the Old World, the flag is again flung to the breeze on the Atlantic seaboard.

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THE FIRST STARS AND STRIPES

- The Stars and Stripes, whose birthday we observe on June 14, was the first flag authorized by the Continental Congress. On that date, in 1777, they resolved: "That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

As to the origin of this flag there are many theories. Some believe that Betsy Ross, a flag maker of Philadelphia, made the first model, while others think that Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, George Washington, or some other person was responsible for the design. Congress failed to designate the manner in which the stars should be placed, and it is still a subject of conjecture whether they appeared in rows, were staggered, or formed a circle. The new flag was adopted by the Continental Congress nearly one year after the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, had pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor for the support of the Declaration of Independence, and the white stars in a blue field took the places of the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew.
The Grand Union Flag, sometimes called the "First Navy Jack," was the "Cambridge Flag," and has also been given other designations, is the immediate predecessor of the Stars and Stripes. This type of flag was carried on the flagship "Alfred" on December 3, 1775, as the navy ensign of the thirteen colonies, after Commodore Esek Hopkins assumed command of the navy built by Congress. It was hoisted by General Washington, January 2, 1776, at Cambridge, Mass., as the standard of the Continental Army, and it was also carried ashore by the Marines who made an expedition to the Bahamas in March of 1776. While this flag was never formally recognized by Congress, it was used on many occasions before June 14, 1777, when the Continental Congress authorized the Stars and Stripes as the national flag. The canton, with its crosses of St. George and St. Andrew, represents a connection with the "mother country," and a severance of these ties brings about the substitution of the white stars in a blue field. It is interesting to note that the Father of Our Country made special mention of the hoisting of this flag at Cambridge. In a letter written to his secretary at Philadelphia, he mentioned that the flag was flown "out of compliment to the United Colonies."

The Battle of Lake Erie, September 10, 1813, Oliver Hazard Perry, who was in command of a fleet which he had been forced to construct in feverish haste from virgin timber unfurled from his mainmast this challenge to sturdy Americanism—the dying words of Captain James Lawrence. Under his inspiration, the sailors and marines fought in one of the most noteworthy engagements of the war, enabling Perry at his close to send the famous message to General William Henry Harrison, "We have met the enemy and they are ours—two deuces and one ace."

The Continental Flag shows the pine tree in a white canton on a red field; other designs show a blue field with a plain cross and pine tree in a white canton. The pine tree was the symbol of the early Massachusetts Navy and of Washington's cruisers, although these flags were usually pine trees on a plain white banner with the words, "An Appeal to God," or "An Appeal to Heaven." Fighting men, who might well be called "Marines," fought on these ships before a corps of Marines was authorized by the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia, in November, 1775. Liberty Trees as they were called, were highly prized by the colonists, which accounts for the tree motif in many early flag designs, and in all early accounts of colonial activities, liberty trees and pines bear an important part. Pine trees also appear on early Massachusetts coins.

The rattlesnake flag, which, with certain variations, was used by the colonists in Massachusetts from 1773 to 1776, is the pine tree design. The Triumph painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill shows the pine tree in a white canton on a red field; other designs show a blue field with a plain cross and pine tree in a white canton. The pine tree was the symbol of the early Massachusetts Navy and of Washington's cruisers, although these flags were usually pine trees on a plain white banner with the words, "An Appeal to God," or "An Appeal to Heaven." Fighting men, who might well be called "Marines," fought on these ships before a corps of Marines was authorized by the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia, in November, 1775. Liberty Trees as they were called, were highly prized by the colonists, which accounts for the tree motif in many early flag designs, and in all early accounts of colonial activities, liberty trees and pines bear an important part. Pine trees also appear on early Massachusetts coins.

The rattlesnake was a popular symbol in the early days of the United States, and it was also used as a signal of resistance to British rule. The rattlesnake flag was adopted by the Continental Congress in 1777, and it was used by the Continental Navy until 1782.

The First Navy Jack is a flag that was first used by the Continental Navy in 1776. It is typically striped in the colors of red, white, and blue, and it is often used as a signal of resistance to British rule. The rattlesnake motif was used on many early American flags, and it was also used as a symbol of freedom and independence.

The Grand Union Flag was first flown in 1775, and it was the forerunner of the modern American flag. The Battle of Lake Erie was a significant battle of the War of 1812, and it was fought on September 10, 1813. The Continental Flag was adopted by the Continental Congress in 1777, and it was used by the Continental Navy until 1782.

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