

America's Most Iconic Historical Flags

# FLAGS

From The

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# Gadsden flag

The **Gadsden flag** is a historical American flag with a yellow field depicting a timber rattlesnake<sup>[1][2]</sup> coiled and ready to strike. Beneath the rattlesnake are the words: "Dont Tread on Me".<sup>[note 1]</sup> Some modern versions of the flag include an apostrophe.

The flag is named after politician Christopher Gadsden (1724–1805), who designed it in 1775 during the American Revolution. It was used by the Continental Marines as an early motto flag, along with the Moultrie flag. It is often used in the United States as a symbol for gun rights and limited government.<sup>[4][5][6]</sup>

**Gadsden flag**



<b>Use</b>	Banner <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Proportion</b>	Not specified
<b>Adopted</b>	1775
<b>Design</b>	A yellow banner charged with a yellow coiled timber rattlesnake facing towards the hoist sitting upon a patch of green grass, with thirteen rattles for the thirteen colonies, the words "Don't Tread on Me" positioned below the snake in black.
<b>Designed by</b>	<u>Christopher Gadsden</u>

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## Appearance and symbolism

### Variations in appearance

Many variations of the Gadsden flag exist. The motto sometimes includes an apostrophe in the word "Don't" and sometimes not;<sup>[7]:339</sup> the typeface used for the motto is sometimes a serif typeface and other times sans-serif. The rattlesnake sometimes is shown as resting on a green ground; representations dating from 1885 and 1917 do not display anything below the rattlesnake. The rattlesnake usually faces to the left, and the early representations mentioned above face left. However, some versions of the flag show the snake facing to the right.

## History of rattlesnake symbol in America



Benjamin Franklin's *Join, or Die* cartoon

The timber rattlesnake can be found in the area of the original Thirteen Colonies. Like the bald eagle, part of its significance is that it was unique to the Americas, serving as a means of showing a separate identity from the Old World. Its use as a symbol of the American colonies can be traced back to the publications of Benjamin Franklin. In 1751, he made the first reference to the rattlesnake in a satirical commentary published in his *Pennsylvania Gazette*. It had been the policy of Parliament to send convicted criminals to the Americas (primarily Georgia), so Franklin suggested that they thank them by sending rattlesnakes to Britain.<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1754, during the French and Indian War, Franklin published his famous woodcut of a snake cut into eight sections. It represented the colonies, with New England joined together as the head and South Carolina as the tail, following their order along the coast. Under the snake was the message "Join, or Die". This was the first political cartoon published in an American newspaper.

In 1774, Paul Revere added Franklin's iconic cartoon to the nameplate of Isaiah Thomas's paper, the *Massachusetts Spy*, depicted there as fighting a British Griffin.<sup>[9]</sup>

In December 1775, Benjamin Franklin published an essay in the *Pennsylvania Journal* under the pseudonym *American Guesser* in which he suggested that the rattlesnake was a good symbol for the American spirit.

The rattlesnake symbol was first officially adopted by the Continental Congress in 1778 when it approved the design for the official Seal of the War Office. At the top center of the Seal is a rattlesnake holding a banner that says: "This We'll Defend". This design of the War Office Seal was carried forward—with some minor modifications—into the subsequent designs as well as the Department of the Army's Seal, Emblem and Flag. As such, some variation of a rattlesnake symbol has been in continuous official use by the US Army for over 236 years.



Flag of the Culpeper Minutemen

Other American flags that use a rattlesnake motif include The United Companies of the Train of Artillery of the Town of Providence, the traditional version of the First Navy Jack, and the Culpeper Minutemen flag, among others.

## History of Gadsden's flag

In the fall of 1775, the Continental Navy was established by General George Washington in his role as Commander in Chief of all Continental Forces, before Esek Hopkins was named Commodore of the Navy. Those first ships were used to intercept incoming transport ships carrying war supplies to the British in the colonies in order to supply the Continental Army, which was desperately undersupplied in the opening years

of the American Revolutionary War. The Second Continental Congress authorized the mustering of five companies of Marines to accompany the Navy on their first mission.

Continental Colonel Christopher Gadsden represented his home state of South Carolina and was one of seven members of the Marine Committee outfitting the first naval mission.<sup>[7]:289</sup> The first Marines enlisted in the city of Philadelphia and carried drums painted yellow and depicting a coiled rattlesnake with thirteen rattles along with the motto "Don't Tread on Me." This is the first recorded mention of the future Gadsden flag's symbolism.

Before the departure of that first mission in December 1775, the newly appointed commander-in-chief of the Navy, Commodore Esek Hopkins, received a yellow rattlesnake flag from Gadsden to serve as the distinctive personal standard of his flagship.<sup>[7]:289</sup> Hopkins had previously led The United Companies of the Train of Artillery of the Town of Providence, which had a similar flag, before being appointed to lead the Navy.<sup>[10]</sup>

Gadsden also presented a copy of this flag to the Congress of South Carolina in Charleston, South Carolina. This was recorded in the South Carolina congressional journals on February 9, 1776:

Col. Gadsden presented to the Congress an elegant standard, such as is to be used by the commander in chief of the American Navy; being a yellow field, with a lively representation of a rattlesnake in the middle in the attitude of going to strike and these words underneath, "Don't tread on me."<sup>[11]</sup>

## Modern use

For historical reasons, the Gadsden flag is still popularly flown in Charleston, South Carolina, the city where Christopher Gadsden first presented the flag and where it was commonly used during the revolution, along with the blue and white crescent flag of pre-Civil War South Carolina.

The Gadsden flag has become a popular specialty license plate in several states. As of 2018, the following states offer the option of obtaining a Gadsden flag specialty license plate: Alabama, Arizona, Maryland,<sup>[12]</sup> Missouri, Montana,<sup>[13]</sup> Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee,<sup>[14]</sup> Texas, and Virginia.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

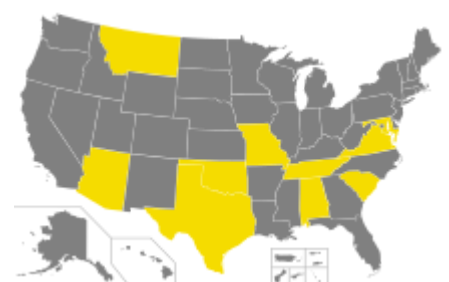
## Use as a libertarian symbol



Gadsden's flag in an 1885 schoolbook



Flag of the Providence United Train of Artillery



Map of states (colored yellow) that offer Gadsden flag specialty license plates.

In the 1970s the Gadsden flag started being used by libertarians, using it as a symbol representing individual rights and limited government.<sup>[5]</sup> The libertarian Free State Project uses a modified version of the flag with the snake replaced with a porcupine, a symbol of the movement.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Use as a Tea Party symbol

Beginning in 2009, the Gadsden flag became widely used as a protest symbol by American Tea Party movement protesters.<sup>[18][19][20]</sup> It was also displayed by members of Congress at Tea Party rallies.<sup>[21]</sup> In some cases, the flag was ruled to be a political, rather than a historic or military, symbol due to the strong Tea Party connection.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Use as a far-right symbol

The Gadsden Flag has also been used as a symbol by far-right groups and individuals.<sup>[23]</sup> In 2014, the flag was used by Jerad and Amanda Miller, the perpetrators of the 2014 Las Vegas shootings who killed two police officers and a civilian.<sup>[24]</sup> The Millers reportedly placed the Gadsden Flag on the corpse of one of the officers they killed.<sup>[25][26]</sup>

The Gadsden flag was featured prominently in a report related to the January 6, 2021 storming of the United States Capitol. Thirty-four-year-old Rosanne Boyland was carrying one when she collapsed from an accidental drug overdose and died in the Capitol.<sup>[27][28]</sup>



Gadsden Flag flown in the area of riots during the January 6th, 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol.

## Legal cases involving the Gadsden flag

In March 2013, the Gadsden flag was raised at a vacant armory building in New Rochelle, New York without permission from city officials. The city ordered its removal<sup>[29]</sup> and the United Veterans Memorial & Patriotic Association, which had maintained the U.S. flag at the armory, filed suit against the city. A federal judge dismissed the case, rejecting the United Veterans' First Amendment argument and ruling that the flagpole in question was city property and thus did not represent private speech.<sup>[30]</sup>

In 2014, a US Postal Service employee filed a complaint about a coworker repeatedly wearing a hat with a Gadsden Flag motif at work. Postal service administration dismissed the complaint, but the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reversed the decision and called for a careful investigation. The EEOC issued a statement clarifying that it did not make any decision that the Gadsden flag was a "racist symbol," or that wearing a depiction of it constituted racial discrimination.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Modern derived designs and parodies

Street Patrol, a 1990s queer self defense group affiliated with Queer Nation/San Francisco, used as its logo a coiled snake over a triangle holding a ribbon with the motto "Don't Tread on Me".<sup>[32][33]</sup> Some libertarian circles use a version of the flag with the snake and motto placed over a rainbow flag.<sup>[34]</sup> Following the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, posters containing a rainbow Gadsden flag inscribed with "#ShootBack" were placed around West Hollywood, upsetting members of the community and city government who opposed its violent message.<sup>[35]</sup>

Parodies of the Gadsden flag are common; one common design replaces the "Don't Tread on Me" motto with "No Step on Snek", sometimes paired with a crudely drawn snake.<sup>[36]</sup>

## Appearances in popular culture

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The Gadsden Flag has made numerous appearances in popular culture, particularly in post-apocalyptic stories.



Rainbow Gadsden flag

### In film and television

- In season 1, episode 7 of *The West Wing*, Sam Seaborn has a modified version of the Gadsden flag behind his desk.<sup>[37]</sup>
- In the apocalyptic 2006 CBS TV drama *Jericho*, the flag is shown several times, most notably in the series finale. Jericho's acting mayor takes down the flag of the "Allied States of America", which had been at the town hall and replaces it with a Gadsden Flag.<sup>[38]</sup>



"No Step on Snek" parody flag

### In video games

- In Hideo Kojima's *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, a variation of the flag can be seen on one of the connecting bridges of the 'Big Shell' facility.<sup>[39]</sup>

### In music

- American heavy metal band Metallica recorded a song called "Don't Tread on Me" on their self-titled fifth studio album, released in 1991. The album cover features a dark grey picture of a coiled rattlesnake like the one found on the Gadsden Flag.<sup>[40]</sup>
- A verse from the 1970 song "Uncle John's Band" by the Grateful Dead contains the words "Their walls are built of cannonballs, their motto is 'Don't tread on me'".<sup>[41]</sup>

### Elsewhere in culture

- NASCAR driver Carl Edwards displayed the Gadsden Flag next to his facsimile signature on his race car.<sup>[42]</sup>
- In the 1979 novel *Alongside Night*, the flag is said to be used by an organization called the Revolutionary Agorist Cadre, which seeks a second American revolution. The flag is shown in the 2014 *Alongside Night* movie adaptation.<sup>[43]</sup>

## See also

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- First Navy Jack

## Notes

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1. During the 18th century, when contractions were coming into widespread use, they were often written without an apostrophe. The standard form for the contraction of "do not" later came to include the apostrophe.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## External links

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 Media related to Gadsden flag at Wikimedia Commons

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Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gadsden\\_flag&oldid=1033952843](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gadsden_flag&oldid=1033952843)"

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# Bennington flag

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The **Bennington flag** is a version of the American flag associated with the American Revolution Battle of Bennington, from which it derives its name. Its distinguishing feature is the inclusion of a large '76' in the canton, a reference to the year 1776 when the Declaration of Independence was signed.



Digital reproduction of the Bennington flag



A replica of the flag flying outside San Francisco City Hall

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## Description

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Like many Revolution era flags, the Bennington features 13 stars and 13 stripes, symbolic of the 13 American colonies that were in a state of rebellion against Great Britain. The Bennington version is easily identified by a large '76' in the canton, recalling the year 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed. Another distinctive feature of the Bennington flag is the arrangement of the 13 stripes, with white being outermost (rather than red being outermost as in most US flags). Also, its stars have seven points each (instead of the now-standard five points) and the blue canton is taller than on other flags, spanning nine instead of seven of the thirteen stripes.

The Bennington flag is a popular version of the American flag, and many historic flag dealers carry it. The large '76' makes it easily identifiable as banner from the American Revolution, evoking Spirit of '76 nostalgia.

## History

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One legend claims that the original Bennington flag was carried off the field by Nathaniel Fillmore and passed down through the Fillmore family, and was, at one time, in the possession of President Millard Fillmore, Nathaniel's grandson. Philetus P. Fillmore flew a Bennington flag in 1877, to commemorate the Battle of Bennington. Mrs. Maude Fillmore Wilson donated the family flag to the Bennington Museum.<sup>[1]</sup> Because of the family association, the flag is also referred to as the "Fillmore flag".<sup>[2]</sup>

Many doubt the actual use of the Fillmore flag at the Battle of Bennington. A Green Mountain Boys flag belonging to John Stark is generally accepted to have been there, but the Bennington flag has become more strongly associated with the event.<sup>[2]</sup> Both Stark's flag and the Fillmore flag are held in a collection at the Bennington Museum, but the Stark flag is accepted as an 18th-century regimental banner, while the museum has dated the Bennington flag from the 19th century based on the nature of the machine-woven fabric it is made from.<sup>[2]</sup> The flag may have been made to evoke revolutionary sentiment during the War of 1812 (fought

against the United Kingdom),<sup>[1]</sup> or to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1826.<sup>[3]</sup> The curator of textiles in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of History and Technology speculated that the flag may even have been a centennial banner, made c. 1876.<sup>[2]</sup>

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## External links

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- [A60 Flag \(https://web.archive.org/web/20070927201256/http://www.benningtonmuseum.com/vewebite/exhibit1/e10002a.htm\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20070927201256/http://www.benningtonmuseum.com/vewebite/exhibit1/e10002a.htm) at the Bennington Museum, with dating details.
- Sites describing the older history:
  - [The Stars and Stripes \(http://www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/1st\\_floor/flag/1bfa\\_hist2.html\)](http://www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/1st_floor/flag/1bfa_hist2.html) at HomeOfHeroes.com
  - [Flag Picture Gallery \(https://web.archive.org/web/20070808161716/http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/flagpics.html\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20070808161716/http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/flagpics.html) by the Independence Hall Association, at UShistory.org.
  - [Bennington Flag History \(http://www.cvsflags.com/bennington.cfm\)](http://www.cvsflags.com/bennington.cfm)
  - [Bennington Flag \(http://www.flagandbanner.com/Products/FBPP0000010422.asp\)](http://www.flagandbanner.com/Products/FBPP0000010422.asp) A grouping of ten historical U.S. flags including the Bennington.

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# Betsy Ross flag

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The **Betsy Ross flag** is an early design of the flag of the United States, named for early American upholsterer and flag maker Betsy Ross.<sup>[1]:107</sup> The pattern of the Betsy Ross flag is 13 alternating red-and-white stripes with stars in a field of blue in the upper left corner canton. Its distinguishing feature is thirteen 5-pointed stars arranged in a circle representing the 13 colonies that fought for their independence during the American Revolutionary War.

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## Betsy Ross



<b>Use</b>	<span><span><span></span></span></span>
<b>Proportion</b>	10:19
<b>Design</b>	Thirteen alternating red and white stripes, a blue canton with thirteen 5-pointed stars arranged in a circle
<b>Designed by</b>	Various

## Betsy Ross story

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Betsy Ross (1752–1836) was an upholsterer in Philadelphia who produced uniforms, tents, and flags for Continental forces. Although her manufacturing contributions are documented, a popular story evolved in which Ross was hired by a group of founding fathers to make a new U.S. flag. According to the legend, she deviated from the 6-pointed stars in the design and produced a flag with 5-pointed stars, instead. The claim by her descendants that Betsy Ross contributed to the flag's design is not generally accepted by modern American scholars and vexillologists.<sup>[2]</sup>

Ross became a notable figure representing the contribution of women in the American Revolution,<sup>[3]</sup> but how this specific design of the U.S. flag became associated with her is unknown. An 1851 painting by Elloie Sully Wheeler of Philadelphia displayed Betsy Ross sewing a U.S. flag, and an 1856 plate glass negative shows a proposed fresco with the Betsy Ross story intended for the Ladies' Waiting Room in the United States Capitol.<sup>[1]:109[4]</sup> The National Museum of American History suggests that the Betsy Ross story first entered into American consciousness about the time of the 1876 Centennial Exposition celebrations.<sup>[5]</sup>

In 1870, Ross's grandson, William J. Canby, presented a paper to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in which he claimed that his grandmother had "made with her hands the first flag" of the United States.<sup>[6]</sup> Canby said he first obtained this information from his aunt Clarissa Sydney Wilson (née Claypoole) in 1857, twenty years after Betsy Ross's death. In his account, the original flag was made in June 1776, when a small committee – including George Washington, Robert Morris and relative George Ross – visited Betsy and discussed the need for a new U.S. flag. Betsy accepted the job to manufacture the flag, altering the committee's design by replacing the six-pointed stars with five-pointed stars. Canby dates the historic episode based on Washington's journey to Philadelphia, in late spring 1776, a year before Congress passed the Flag Act.<sup>[7]</sup> Ross biographer Marla Miller notes that even if one accepts Canby's presentation, Betsy Ross was merely one of several flag makers in Philadelphia, and her only contribution to the design was cut the easier 5-pointed stars.<sup>[8]:176</sup>



Poster for 1917 film Betsy Ross

In 1878, Col. J. Franklin Reigart published a somewhat different story in his book, "The history of the first United States flag, and the patriotism of Betsy Ross, the immortal heroine that originated the first flag of the Union." Reigart remembers visiting his great aunt, Mrs. Betsy Ross, in 1824 during the time of General Lafayette's visit to Philadelphia. In this version, Dr. Benjamin Franklin replaces George Washington. Together with George Ross and Robert Morris, they request that Mrs. Ross design the first flag. The Canby version and the subsequent 1909 book with the Ross family affidavits never specify the arrangement of stars. Reigart, however, describes Mrs. Ross' flag with an eagle in the canton with 13 stars surrounding its head. The cover of Reigart's book shows the 13 stars in a 3-2-3 lined pattern in the canton.<sup>[9]</sup>

The circle pattern was again attributed to Elizabeth Griscom Ross in an 1893 painting by Charles H. Weisgerber.<sup>[10]</sup> The 9 x 12 foot painting was first displayed at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Weisgerber later helped start the foundation that restored 239 Arch Street in Philadelphia as The Betsy Ross House.<sup>[11]</sup> Weisgerber promoted the story of Betsy Ross by sending prints of the painting to foundation donors. It was reported in 1928 that he received donations from 4 million children and adults.<sup>[12]</sup> In 1897, the New York City School Board approved the order of framed prints for all schools in their system.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Canby Account

Ross' grandson, William Canby, publicly presented a version of her story to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1870.<sup>[14]</sup> Canby's 1870 account remains popular American folklore, but has been the source of some debate. Although the account has supporters, there is a lack of historical evidence and documentation to support Canby's story.<sup>[15][a]</sup> It is worth pointing out that while modern lore may exaggerate the details of her story, Canby's account of Betsy Ross never claimed any contribution to the flag *design* except for the five-pointed star, which was simply easier for her to make.<sup>[16]:32[8]:176</sup>

Additionally, arguments against Canby's story include:

- Despite Canby's efforts, he could find no records to show that the Continental Congress had a committee to design the national flag in the spring of 1776.<sup>[17]</sup>
- Although George Washington had been a member of the First Continental Congress, he left Congress to become commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in 1775.<sup>[18]:66</sup> Therefore, it would have been impossible for him to head a congressional committee in 1776.

- In letters and diaries that have surfaced, neither George Washington, Col. Ross, Robert Morris, nor any other member of Congress mentioned anything about a national flag in 1776.
- Six-pointed stars were used in the 1782 Great Seal that was based on the 1777 flag. The stars in the Great Seal were not changed to five-pointed stars until the Seal was recast in 1841.<sup>[19]</sup>
- The Flag Resolution of June 1777 was the first documented meeting, discussion, or debate by Congress about a national flag.
- On May 29, 1777, Betsy Ross was paid by the Pennsylvania State Navy Board for making Pennsylvania naval flags, not the Stars and Stripes.<sup>[18]:117</sup>



*Betsy Ross 1777*, a ca. 1920 depiction by artist Jean Leon Jerome Ferris of Ross showing Gen. George Washington (seated, left), Robert Morris and George Ross how she cut the revised five-pointed stars for the flag.

Supporters of Canby's story defend his account with arguments including:

- Robert Morris was a business partner of John Ross, Betsy's cousin by marriage. Morris was on the Marine Committee at the time the flag vote was taken as part of Marine Committee business.<sup>[20]</sup>
- George Washington has at least one documented transaction with John and Betsy Ross, when he bought bed hangings from them in 1774.<sup>[21]</sup>
- George Washington was in Philadelphia in May and June 1776 for fifteen days. Subsequent to his meeting with Congress during this time, a committee was formed to confer with Washington on military options. The membership included George Read, the uncle of John Ross, late husband of Betsy Ross.<sup>[8]:173</sup>
- Rachel Fletcher, Betsy Ross's daughter, gave an affidavit to the Betsy Ross story.<sup>[22]</sup>
- A painting which might be dated 1851 by Ellie Wheeler, allegedly the daughter of Thomas Sully, shows Betsy Ross sewing the flag. If the painting is authentic and the date correct, the story was known nearly 20 years before Canby's presentation to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.<sup>[23]</sup>

## "First Flag"

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Canby's account and similar versions of the Betsy Ross tale often refer to this design as the "first U.S. flag", but there is no consensus on what the first U.S. flag looked like, nor who produced it. There were at least 17 flag makers and upholsterers who worked in Philadelphia during the time these early American flags were made. Margaret Manny is thought to have made the first Continental Colors (or Grand Union Flag), but there is no evidence to prove she also made the Stars and Stripes. Other flag makers of that period include Rebecca Young, Anne King, Cornelia Bridges, and flag painter William Barrett. Hugh Stewart sold a "flag of the United Colonies" to the Committee of Safety, and William Alliborne was one of the first to manufacture United States ensigns.<sup>[8]:161</sup> Any flag maker in Philadelphia could have sewn the first American flag. Even according to Canby, there were other variations of the flag being made at the same time Ross was sewing the design that would carry her name. If true, there may not be one "first" flag, but many.

The Marine Committee of the Second Continental Congress passed a Flag Resolution on June 14, 1777, establishing the first congressional description of official United States ensigns. The shape and arrangement of the stars is not mentioned – there were variations – but the legal description legitimized the Ross flag and similar designs.

*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.<sup>[25]</sup>

As late as 1779, the War Board of the Continental Congress had still not settled on what the Army Standard of the United States should look like. The Board sent a letter to General Washington asking his opinion, and submitting a design that included a serpent, as well as a number corresponding to the state that flew the flag.<sup>[18]:118</sup>

Francis Hopkinson is often given credit for a number of 13-star arrangements, including the Betsy Ross design. In a 1780 letter to the Continental Board of Admiralty dealing with the Admiralty seal,<sup>[26]:44</sup> Hopkinson mentioned patriotic designs he created in the past few years, including "the Flag of the United States of America." He asked for compensation for his designs, but his claim for full compensation was rejected. Hopkinson was not the only person consulted on designing the Great Seal of the United States. Furthermore, he was a public servant and thus was already on the government's payroll.<sup>[26]:48</sup>

Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich argues that there was no "first flag" worth arguing over.<sup>[27]</sup> Ross biographer Marla Miller asserts that the question of Betsy Ross' involvement in the flag should not be one of design, but of production and entrepreneurship.<sup>[21]</sup> Researchers accept that the United States flag evolved, and did not have one design. In fact, Grace Cooper's research for the Smithsonian Institution found 17 examples of 13-star flags that were in existence between 1779 and ca. 1796.<sup>[28]</sup> Marla Miller writes, "The flag, like the Revolution it represents, was the work of many hands."<sup>[8]:181</sup>

## Symbolism

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Because the flag evolved during the American Revolutionary War, the meaning of the design is uncertain. Historians and experts discredit the common theory that the stripes and five-pointed stars derived from the Washington family coat of arms.<sup>[29]</sup> While this theory adds to Washington's legendary involvement in the development of the first flag, no evidence exists to show a connection between his coat of arms and the flag, other than that his coat of arms has stars and stripes in it. Washington frequently used his family coat of arms with three five-pointed red stars and three red-and-white stripes, on which is based the flag of the District of Columbia.

## Stripes

During the Revolutionary War era and into the 19th century, the "Rebellious Stripes" were considered as the most important element of United States flags, and were almost always mentioned before the stars.<sup>[16]:29</sup> The usage of stripes in the flag may be linked to two pre-existing flags. A 1765 Sons of Liberty flag flown in Boston had nine red and white stripes, and these "rebellious stripes" would influence later designs leading up to the American Revolution.<sup>[30]</sup> A flag used by Captain Abraham Markoe's Philadelphia Light Horse Troop in 1775 had 13 blue and silver stripes.<sup>[31]</sup> One or both of these flags likely influenced the design of the American flag.

## Stars



The "Betsy Ross" flag is featured on the seal of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, together with the modern United States flag to represent veterans throughout United States history.<sup>[24]</sup>



The canton, featuring the stars, may have gradually replaced the Grand Union flag as hope for reconciliation faded.<sup>[32]</sup> Regimental flags featuring stars in a blue canton, such as those of the Green Mountain Boys or 1st Rhode Island Regiment, may have pre-dated the 1777 Flag Resolution.<sup>[32]</sup> Stars were important symbols in European heraldry, their meaning differing with the shape and number of points. Stars appear in colonial flags as early as 1676.<sup>[b]</sup> Some have speculated that stars may be linked to Freemasonry, but stars of this type were not an important icon in Freemasonry.<sup>[33]</sup> Although early American flags featured stars with various numbers of points, the five-pointed star is a defining feature of the Betsy Ross legend. The five-pointed star became the norm on Navy ensigns, perhaps because five-pointed stars were more clearly defined from a distance.<sup>[16]:64</sup>

## Circle



A 1782 Great Seal of the United States design features a flag with a circle of stars in the canton and white stripes on the edges.

The shape and arrangement of the stars varied widely throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and remains undefined by the various flag acts. In the late 18th century, a circle of stars, also known as a "wreath"<sup>[16]:44</sup> or "medallion" arrangement,<sup>[34]:34</sup> was a favorite for painters and coin designers, as well as some flag makers.<sup>[34]:34</sup> The circle generally represented unity between the states, with no state more dominant than any other.<sup>[35]</sup> Circular arrangements similar to the "Betsy Ross" design were seen as early as 1777 at the surrender of General John Burgoyne at Saratoga. Eyewitness Alfred Street wrote:

The stars were disposed in a circle, symbolizing the perpetuity of the Union; the ring, like the circling serpent of the Egyptians, signifying eternity. The thirteen stripes showed with the stars the number of the United Colonies, and denoted the subordination of the States to the Union, as well as equality among themselves."<sup>[35][c]</sup>

A flag with a circle of stars was again found in 1782, in William Barton's 2nd design for the Great Seal of the United States. Barton described the circle as a "symbol of eternity."<sup>[8]:176</sup> Ironically, although the circle of stars is a feature of the "Betsy Ross" design, none of Betsy Ross' family documents mention this arrangement. Circumstantial evidence from the Betsy Ross House suggests that Betsy Ross may have arranged her stars in rows.<sup>[8]:176</sup>

## Colors

Early US flags used a wide variety of colors,<sup>[16]:25</sup> and there is no known documented meaning behind the colors of the flag until Charles Thomson, in his 1782 report to Congress on the Great Seal of the United States, wrote "The colours of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America. White signifies



The 1779 portrait Washington at Princeton shows a blue battle flag with a circle of thirteen 6-point white stars.

purity and innocence. Red hardiness and valour and Blue the colour of the Chief signifies vigilance perseverance and justice."<sup>[37]</sup> The use of red and blue in flags at this time in history may derive from the relative fastness of the dyes indigo and cochineal, providing blue and red colors respectively, as aniline dyes were unknown. However, the most simple explanation for the colors of the American flag is that it was modeled after British flags. For example, the Grand Union Flag, a predecessor to early stars and stripes designs, was likely based on the King's Colours or East India Company flag.

## Political and cultural significance

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The "Betsy Ross" design, with its easily identifiable circle of stars, has long been regarded as a symbol of the American Revolution and the young Republic.<sup>[40]</sup> William J. Canby's recounting of the event appealed to Americans eager for stories about the revolution and its heroines. Betsy Ross was promoted as a patriotic role model for young girls and a symbol of women's contributions to American history.<sup>[41]</sup>

The Betsy Ross flag design is featured prominently in a number of post-Revolutionary paintings about the war, such as General George Washington at Trenton (1792)<sup>[d]</sup> and Washington Crossing the Delaware (1851). During the United States centennial, not long after the presentation by William Canby, the Betsy Ross design became a highly produced and popular flag.<sup>[18]:207</sup>

The traditional backdrop at quadrennial United States presidential inaugurations uses a large Betsy Ross flag and the modern US flag to represent the history of the nation. Since the 1980s, this display also includes a US flag design symbolizing the year the president's home state was admitted to the union. During the inaugurations of Donald Trump and Joe Biden, the Betsy Ross flag was placed next to another 13-star "Hopkinson" flag design to represent the states of New York and Delaware, respectively.<sup>[43][44]</sup>

The circle of 13 stars, which defines the "Betsy Ross" design, is found on two state flags: the Flag of Rhode Island and the Flag of Indiana. The Flag of Missouri features a similar circle of 24 stars, since it was admitted as the 24th state. The United States Foreign Service flag also features the circle of 13-stars.

Since 1963, the Philadelphia 76ers have used the distinctive ring of 13 5-pointed stars in their team logo,<sup>[45]</sup> as a reference to Philadelphia as the first United States capital, where the Declaration of Independence was signed and where Betsy Ross worked.



The "Betsy Ross" design is traditionally displayed at US presidential inaugurations. Here, at the first inauguration of Barack Obama, it is flown next to a 21 star flag representing the American flag at the time that Illinois joined the Union.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

### U.S. postage stamps featuring the Betsy Ross flag design



3¢ stamp issued in 1952 to commemorate Betsy Ross' 200th birthday.<sup>[46]</sup>



A 6¢ stamp with the Betsy Ross design was released in 1968 as part of the "Historic Flag" series.<sup>[47]</sup>



10¢ stamp released in 1973, showing a 50-star flag and a Betsy Ross flag together, to commemorate the United States Bicentennial.<sup>[48]</sup>



1975 13¢ stamp features the Betsy Ross flag behind Independence Hall<sup>[49]</sup>

## See also

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- [Cowpens flag](#)
- [Flag of the United States](#)
- [Grand Union Flag](#)

## Notes

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- See external links for arguments for and against Canby's story.
- Portsmouth and Providence both featured flags with stars by 1680.<sup>[16]:32</sup>
- George Henry Preble's 1880 edition of his History of the American Flag finds Alfred Street's "poetic and fanciful" account to be unsubstantiated by any contemporaneous proof.<sup>[36]</sup>
- [Grace Rogers Cooper](#) writes "In 1792, Trumbull painted thirteen stars in a circle in his General George Washington at Trenton in the Yale University Art Gallery. In his unfinished rendition of

the Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, date not established, the circle of stars is suggested and one star shows six points while the thirteen stripes are of red, white, and blue. How accurately the artist depicted the star design that he saw is not known. At times, he may have offered a poetic version of the flag he was interpreting which was later copied by the flag maker. The flag sheets and the artists do not agree. {...} Star arrangement Number of star points Colors of stripe Earliest usage {...} (13 stars in a circle) not visible red, white 1792<sup>[42]</sup>

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- 

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Betsy\\_Ross\\_flag&oldid=1032382787](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Betsy_Ross_flag&oldid=1032382787)"

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# Grand Union Flag

The "**Grand Union Flag**" (also known as the "**Continental Colors**", the "**Congress Flag**", the "**Cambridge Flag**", and the "**First Navy Ensign**") is considered to be the first national flag of the United States of America.<sup>[1]</sup>

Like the current U.S. flag, the Grand Union Flag has 13 alternating red and white stripes, representative of the Thirteen Colonies. The upper inner corner, or canton, featured the flag of the Kingdom of Great Britain, of which the colonies had been subjects.

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## History

By the end of 1775, during the first year of the American Revolutionary War, the Second Continental Congress operated as a *de facto* war government authorizing the creation of the Continental Army, the Continental Navy, and even a small contingent of Continental Marines. A new flag was needed to represent the Congress and the United Colonies with a banner distinct from the British Red Ensign flown from civilian and merchant vessels, the White Ensign of the British Royal Navy, and the Flag of Great Britain carried on land by the British army. The emerging states had been using their own independent flags, with Massachusetts using the Taunton Flag, and New York using the George Rex Flag, prior to the adoption of united colors.

Americans first hoisted the Colors on the colonial warship *Alfred*, in the harbor on the western shore of the Delaware River at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on December 3, 1775, by newly appointed Lieutenant John Paul Jones of the formative Continental Navy. The event had been documented in letters to Congress and in eyewitness accounts.<sup>[2]</sup> The flag was used by the Continental Army forces as both a naval ensign and garrison flag throughout 1776 and early 1777.

### United States of America



<b>Names</b>	The Grand Union Flag, Continental Colors, Congress Flag, Cambridge Flag, First Navy Ensign
<b>Adopted</b>	December 3, 1775
<b>Relinquished</b>	June 14, 1777
<b>Design</b>	Thirteen horizontal stripes alternating red and white; in the canton, the <u>Flag of Great Britain</u>



A replica flag flying outside San Francisco City Hall, San Francisco, California



It is not known for certain when or by whom the design of the Continental Colors was created, but the flag could easily be produced by sewing white stripes onto the British Red Ensigns.<sup>[3]</sup> The "*Alfred*" flag has been credited to Margaret Manny.<sup>[4]</sup>

It was widely believed that the flag was raised by George Washington's army on New Year's Day, 1776, at Prospect Hill in Charlestown (now part of Somerville), near his headquarters at Cambridge, Massachusetts, (across the Charles River to the north from Boston), which was then surrounding and laying siege to the British forces then occupying the city, and that the flag was interpreted by British military observers in the city under commanding General Thomas Gage, as a sign of surrender.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Some scholars dispute the traditional account and conclude that the flag raised at Prospect Hill was probably the flag of Great Britain,<sup>[3]</sup> though subsequent research supports the contrary.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

The flag has had several names, at least five of which have been popularly remembered. The more recent moniker, "Grand Union Flag", was first applied in the 19th-century Reconstruction era by George Henry Preble, in his 1872 *History of the American Flag*.<sup>[3]</sup>

The design of the Colors is strikingly similar to the flag of the British East India Company (EIC). Indeed, certain EIC designs in use since 1707 (when the canton was changed from the flag of England to that of the flag of Great Britain) were nearly identical, but the number of stripes varied from 9 to 15. That EIC flags could have been known by the American colonists has been the basis of a theory of the origin of the national flag's design.<sup>[9]</sup>

Use of the flag of Great Britain in the canton led vexillologist Nick Groom to propose the theory that the Grand Union was adopted by George Washington's army as a protest against the rule of the British Parliament but a profession of continued loyalty towards King George III.<sup>[10]</sup>

The Grand Union became obsolete following the passing of the Flag Act of 1777 by the Continental Congress which authorized a new official national flag of a design similar to that of the Colors, with thirteen stars (representing the thirteen States) on a field of blue replacing the flag of Great Britain in the canton. The resolution describes only "a new constellation" for the arrangement of the white stars in the blue canton so a number of designs were later interpreted and made with a circle of equal stars, another circle with one star in the center, and various designs of even or alternate horizontal rows of stars, even the "Bennington flag" from Bennington, Vermont which had the number "76" surmounted by an arch of 13 stars, later also becoming known in 1976 as the "Bicentennial Flag".<sup>[11]</sup>

The combined crosses in the flag of Great Britain symbolized the union of the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland. The symbolism of a union of equal parts was retained in the new U.S. flag, as described in the Flag Resolution of June 14, 1777 (later celebrated in U.S. culture and history as "Flag Day").

## In fiction

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In some alternate history fictions set in realities where the American Revolutionary War was either averted or won by Great Britain, the Grand Union Flag has been depicted as the flag of a North American nation within the British Empire.



"First National Flag", School Text: "*A Brief History of the United States*", 1880



The design for the flag was based in part on the Red Ensign used in British America and the Thirteen Colonies.

In *For Want of a Nail* by Robert Sobel, it serves as the flag of the Confederation of North America, a self-governing dominion created in 1843 via the second of two Britannic Designs after John Burgoyne's victory at the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777, resulting in the Conciliationists gaining control of the Continental Congress in 1778.



Versions of the Grand Union Flag in alternate history novels may be modified so that the Union Jack in the canton also represents Ireland.

In *The Two Georges* by Harry Turtledove and Richard Dreyfuss, it serves as the flag for the North American Union and is commonly referred to as the 'Jack and Stripes'. A modified version of the flag used by the separatist Independence Party and the nativist terrorist organisation the Sons of Liberty replaces the Union Jack with a bald eagle on a blue field.

In the *Sliders* episode *Prince of Wails*, set in a reality where the American Revolution was successfully suppressed, it serves as the flag of the British States of America, a heavily taxed and dictatorially-governed corner of the British Empire.

## See also

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- George Rex Flag
- Flag of New England
- Flag of Hawaii
- Betsy Ross flag
- Flag of the East India Company

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## External links

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- [Grand Union Flag \(http://fotw.info/flags/us-gu.html\)](http://fotw.info/flags/us-gu.html) at [Flags of the World](#)
- 

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Grand\\_Union\\_Flag&oldid=1031530830](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Grand_Union_Flag&oldid=1031530830)"

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# Come and take it

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"**Come and take it**" is a historic slogan, first used in 480 BC in the Battle of Thermopylae as "Molon labe" by Spartan King Leonidas I as a defiant answer and last stand to the surrender demanded by the Persian Army,<sup>[1]</sup> and later in 1778 at Fort Morris in the Province of Georgia during the American revolution, and in 1835 at the Battle of Gonzales during the Texas Revolution.



Detail of a mural in the museum at Gonzales, Texas, featuring the *Come and Take It* flag

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## American Revolutionary War

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Sunbury, Georgia is now a ghost town, though in the past it was active as a port, located east of Hinesville, Georgia. Fort Morris was constructed in Sunbury by the authority of the Continental Congress. A contingent of British soldiers attempted to take the fort on November 25, 1778. The American contingent at Fort Morris was led by Colonel John McIntosh (c. 1748–1826).<sup>[2]</sup> The Americans numbered only 127 Continental soldiers plus militiamen and local citizens. The fort itself was crudely constructed and could not have withstood any concerted attack.

The British commander, Colonel Fuser, demanded Fort Morris' surrender through a written note to the American rebels. Though clearly outnumbered (he had only about 200 men plus artillery), Colonel McIntosh's defiant written response to the British demand included the following line: "As to surrendering the fort, receive this laconic reply: COME AND TAKE IT!". The British declined to attack, in large part due to their lack of intelligence regarding other forces in the area. Colonel Fuser believed a recent skirmish in the area, combined with Colonel McIntosh's bravado, might have reflected reinforcements and so the British withdrew.

The British returned in January 1779 with a larger force. They later conquered and controlled nearly all of Georgia for the next few years.<sup>[3]</sup> Col. McIntosh's defiance was one successful and heroic event which inspired the patriots as the War moved to the Carolinas and then north.



Fort Morris historical marker with "Come and take it!"

The Fort Morris Historical Marker is on Martin Road, Midway, Georgia.<sup>[4]</sup> It is located at the visitor center for the Fort Morris Historic Site. The center is located off Fort Morris Road, at the end of the Colonels Island Highway (Georgia Route 38). The marker memorializes the battle and notes the "Come and Take It!" response.

In recognition of his valor of defending Fort Morris in Sunbury, McIntosh was awarded a sword by the Georgia Legislature with the words "Come and Take It" engraved on the blade.<sup>[5]</sup> McIntosh later served in the War of 1812 as an American General, still protecting the Georgia coast. He served honorably, receiving honors from the City of Savannah for his service.

## Texas Revolution

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The replica at the Texas State Capitol, showing spiked touch-hole detail

In early January 1831, Green DeWitt wrote to Ramón Músquiz, the top political official of Bexar, and requested armament for defense of the colony of Gonzales. This request was granted by delivery of a small used cannon. The small bronze cannon was received by the colony and signed for on March 10, 1831, by James Tumlinson, Jr.<sup>[6]</sup> The swivel

cannon was mounted to a blockhouse in Gonzales and later was the object of Texas pride. At the minor skirmish known as the Battle of Gonzales—the first land battle of the Texas Revolution against Mexico—a small group of Texans successfully resisted the Mexican forces who had orders from Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea to seize their cannon. As a symbol of defiance, the Texans had fashioned a flag containing the phrase "come and take it" along with a black star and an image of the cannon that they had received four years earlier from Mexican officials. This was the same message that was sent to the Mexican government when they told the Texans to return the cannon; lack of compliance with the initial demands led to the failed attempt by the Mexican military to forcefully take back the cannon.<sup>[7]</sup>

Replicas of the original flag can be seen in the Texas State Capitol, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, the Sam Houston State University CJ Center, the University of Texas at El Paso Library, the Marine Military Academy headquarters building, the Hockaday School Hoblitzelle Auditorium, and in Perkins Library at Duke University.

## Adapted uses

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The Come and Take it flag has been appropriated in many contexts in the 21st century by Second Amendment activists.<sup>[9]</sup>

The first-known modified version, from the 1990s, replaces the cannon with an M16 rifle and was displayed at a Bill of Rights rally in Arizona following the announcement by President George H. W. Bush that certain types of firearms and firearms parts would be banned. It was shown at a number of later rallies and campaign events through the late 1990s, and now resides in a private collection.<sup>[10]</sup>



The *Come and Take It* flag



Detail from the monument in Gonzales, Texas

In 2002, a version of the flag was created which depicted a Barrett .50 BMG Rifle. Other versions have depicted various firearms, and even other objects dear to the hearts of the flag makers. During the 2000 Stanley Cup Finals at least one Dallas Stars fan had created a replica of the flag with the Stanley Cup replacing the cannon; the Stars were the defending champions that year.<sup>[11]</sup>



COME AND TAKE IT

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Adapted version with folder icon as associated with Deterrence Dispensed<sup>[8]</sup>

## External links

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- Gonzales "come and take it" cannon (<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qvg01>) from the *Handbook of Texas Online*
  - Gonzales Flag as designed in 1835 (<http://www.flagandbanner.com/Products/HCOME35.asp>)
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Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Come\\_and\\_take\\_it&oldid=1025238787](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Come_and_take_it&oldid=1025238787)"

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# Flags of the Confederate States of America

The **flags of the Confederate States of America** have a history of three successive designs from 1861 to 1865. The flags were known as the "Stars and Bars", used from 1861 to 1863, the "Stainless Banner", used from 1863 to 1865, and the "Blood-Stained Banner", used in 1865 shortly before the Confederacy's dissolution. A rejected national flag design was also used as a battle flag by the *Confederate Army* and featured in the "Stainless Banner" and "Blood-Stained Banner" designs. Although this design was never a national flag, it is the most commonly recognized symbol of the Confederacy.

Since the end of the *American Civil War*, private and official use of the Confederacy's flags, particularly the battle flag, has continued amid philosophical, political, cultural, and racial controversy in the United States. These include flags displayed in states; cities, towns and counties; schools, colleges and universities; private organizations and associations; and individuals. The battle flag was also featured in the *state flags* of *Georgia* and *Mississippi*, although it was removed from both; the former in 2001, and the latter in 2020. After the former was changed in 2001, the city of *Trenton, Georgia* has used a *flag design* nearly identical to the previous version with the battle flag.

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## First flag: the "Stars and Bars" (1861–1863)

### Confederate States of America



Variant of the first national flag with 13 stars  
(November 28, 1861 – May 1, 1863)

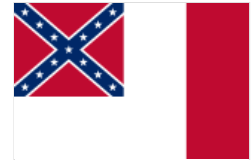
Name	"The Stars and Bars"
Use	National flag <span><span><span></span></span></span>
Proportion	10:18
Adopted	March 4, 1861 (first 7-star version) November 28, 1861 (final 13-star version)
Design	Three horizontal stripes of equal height, alternating red and white, with a blue square two-thirds the height of the flag as the canton. Inside the canton are seven to thirteen white five-pointed stars of equal size, arranged in a circle and pointing outward.
Designed by	Nicola Marschall



The second national flag of the Confederate States of America

Name	"The Stainless Banner" <sup><span>[</span>note 1<span>]</span></sup>
Use	National flag <span><span><span></span></span></span>
Proportion	1:2 <sup><span>[</span>note 2<span>]</span></sup>
Adopted	May 1, 1863
Design	A white rectangle two times as wide as it is tall, a red quadrilateral in the canton, inside the canton is a blue saltire with white outlining, with thirteen white five-pointed stars of equal size inside the saltire.





The third national flag of the Confederate States of America.

<b>Name</b>	"The Blood-Stained Banner"
<b>Use</b>	National flag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Proportion</b>	2:3
<b>Adopted</b>	March 4, 1865
<b>Design</b>	A white rectangle, one-and-a-half times as wide as it is tall, a red vertical stripe on the far right of the rectangle, a red quadrilateral in the canton, inside the canton is a blue saltire with white outlining, with thirteen white five-pointed stars of equal size inside the saltire. <sup>[note 3]</sup>
<b>Designed by</b>	Maj. Arthur L. Rogers <sup>[13]</sup>



First flag with 7 stars  
(March 4 – May 21, 1861)



Flag with 9 stars  
(May 21 – July 2, 1861)



Flag with 11 stars  
(July 2 – November 28, 1861)



Last flag with 13 stars  
(November 28, 1861 – May 1, 1863)

The Confederacy's first official national flag often called the *Stars and Bars*, flew from March 4, 1861, to May 1, 1863. It was designed by Prussian-American artist [Nicola Marschall](#) in [Marion, Alabama](#), and resembled the [Flag of Austria](#), with which Marschall would have been familiar.<sup>[14][15]</sup> The original version of the flag featured a circle of seven white stars in the navy blue canton, representing the seven states of the South that originally comprised the Confederacy: [South Carolina](#), [Mississippi](#), [Florida](#), [Alabama](#), [Georgia](#), [Louisiana](#), and [Texas](#). The "Stars and Bars" flag was adopted March 4, 1861, in the first temporary national capital of [Montgomery, Alabama](#), and raised over the dome of that first Confederate capitol. Marschall also designed the [Confederate army uniform](#).<sup>[15]</sup>

A monument in [Louisburg, North Carolina](#), claims the "Stars and Bars" "was designed by a son of North Carolina / Orren Randolph Smith / and made under his direction by / Catherine Rebecca (Murphy) Winborne. / Forwarded to Montgomery, Ala. Feb 12, 1861, / Adopted by the Provisional Congress March 4, 1861".<sup>[16]</sup>

One of the first acts of the Provisional Confederate Congress was to create the *Committee on the Flag and Seal*, chaired by [William Porcher Miles](#), a congressman and [Fire-Eater](#) from [South Carolina](#). The committee asked the public to submit thoughts and ideas on the topic and was, as historian [John M. Coski](#) puts it, "overwhelmed by requests not to abandon the 'old flag' of the United States." Miles had already designed a flag that later became known as the Confederate *Battle Flag*, and he favored his flag over the "Stars and Bars" proposal. But given the popular support for a flag similar to the U.S. flag ("the Stars and Stripes" – originally established and designed in June 1777 during the [Revolutionary War](#)), the "Stars and Bars" design was approved by the committee.<sup>[17]</sup>






As the Confederacy grew, so did the numbers of stars: two were added for [Virginia](#) and [Arkansas](#) in May 1861, followed by two more representing [Tennessee](#) and [North Carolina](#) in July, and finally two more for [Missouri](#) and [Kentucky](#) (neither of these two states seceded, but partisan factional "governments" declared secession without achieving control of substantial territory or population in either case).

When the American Civil War broke out, the "Stars and Bars" confused the battlefield at the [First Battle of Bull Run](#) because of its similarity to the U.S. flag, especially when it was hanging limp, down on the flagstaff.<sup>[18]</sup> The "Stars and Bars" was also criticized on ideological grounds for its resemblance to the U.S. flag. Many Confederates disliked the Stars and Bars, seeing it as symbolic of a centralized federal power the Confederate states claimed to be seceding from.<sup>[19]</sup> As early as April 1861, a month after the flag's adoption, some were already criticizing the flag, calling it a "servile imitation" and a "detested parody" of the U.S. flag.<sup>[3]</sup> In January 1862, [George William Bagby](#), writing for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, wrote that many Confederates disliked the flag. "Everybody wants a new Confederate flag," Bagby wrote. "The present one is universally hated. It resembles the [Yankee flag](#), and that is enough to make it unutterably detestable." The editor of the *Charleston Mercury* expressed a similar view: "It

seems to be generally agreed that the 'Stars and Bars' will never do for us. They resemble too closely the dishonored 'Flag of Yankee Doodle' ... we imagine that the 'Battle Flag' will become the Southern Flag by popular acclaim." William T. Thompson, the editor of the Savannah-based *Daily Morning News* also objected to the flag, due to its aesthetic similarity to the U.S. flag, which for some Confederates had negative associations with emancipation and abolitionism. Thompson stated in April 1863 that he disliked the adopted flag "on account of its resemblance to that of the abolition despotism against which we are fighting."<sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6][7]</sup>

Over the course of the flag's use by the CSA, additional stars were added to the canton, eventually bringing the total number to thirteen—a reflection of the Confederacy's claims of having admitted the border states of Kentucky and Missouri, where slavery was still widely practiced.<sup>[note 4]</sup> The first showing of the 13-star flag was outside the Ben Johnson House in Bardstown, Kentucky; the 13-star design was also in use as the Confederate navy's battle ensign.

## Second flag: the "Stainless Banner" (1863–1865)

				
Second national flag (May 1, 1863 – March 4, 1865), 2:1 ratio	Second national flag (May 1, 1863 - March 4, 1865), also used as the Confederate navy's ensign, 3:2 ratio	A 12-star variant of the Stainless Banner produced in Mobile, Alabama	Variant captured following the Battle of Painesville, 1865	Garrison Flag of Fort Fisher, the "Southern Gibraltar"

Many different designs were proposed during the solicitation for a second Confederate national flag, nearly all based on the Battle Flag. By 1863, it had become well-known and popular among those living in the Confederacy. The Confederate Congress specified that the new design be a white field "...with the union (now used as the battle flag) to be a square of two-thirds the width of the flag, having the ground red; thereupon a broad saltire of blue, bordered with white, and emblazoned with mullets or five-pointed stars, corresponding in number to that of the Confederate States."<sup>[11]</sup>

The flag is also known as *the Stainless Banner*, and the matter of the person behind its design remains a point of contention. On April 23, 1863, the *Savannah Morning News* editor William Tappan Thompson, with assistance from William Ross Postell, a Confederate blockade runner, published an editorial championing a design featuring the battle flag on a white background he referred to later as "The White Man's Flag."<sup>[6]</sup> In explaining the white background, Thompson wrote, "As a people we are fighting to maintain the Heaven-ordained supremacy of the white man over the inferior or colored race; a white flag would thus be emblematical of our cause."<sup>[1][2][3][4][7][8][9][10]</sup> In a letter to Confederate Congressman C. J. Villeré, dated April 24, 1863, a design similar to Thompson's was proposed by General P. G. T. Beauregard, "whose earlier penchant for practicality had established the precedent for visual distinctiveness on the battlefield, proposed that 'a good design for the national flag would be the present battle-flag as Union Jack, and the rest all white'....The final version of the second national flag, adopted May 1, 1863, did just this: it set the St. Andrew's Cross of stars in the Union Jack with the rest of the civilian banner entirely white."<sup>[20][21][22][23][24][25][26][27]</sup>

The Confederate Congress debated whether the white field should have a blue stripe and whether it should be bordered in red. William Miles delivered a speech supporting the simple white design that was eventually approved. He argued that the battle flag must be used, but it was necessary to emblazon it for a national flag, but as simply as possible, with a plain white field.<sup>[28]</sup> When Thompson received word the Congress had adopted the design with a blue stripe, he published an editorial on April 28 in opposition, writing that "the blue bar running up the centre of the white field and joining with the right lower arm of the blue cross, is in bad taste, and utterly destructive of the symmetry and harmony of the design."<sup>[1][5]</sup> Confederate Congressman Peter W. Gray proposed the amendment that gave the flag its white field.<sup>[29]</sup> Gray stated that the white field represented "purity, truth, and freedom."<sup>[30]</sup>

Regardless of who truly originated the Stainless Banner's design, whether by heeding Thompson's editorials or Beauregard's letter, the Confederate Congress officially adopted the Stainless Banner on May 1, 1863. The flags that were actually produced by the Richmond Clothing Depot used the 1.5:1 ratio adopted for the Confederate navy's battle ensign, rather than the official 2:1 ratio.<sup>[11]</sup>

Initial reaction to the second national flag was favorable, but over time it became criticized for being "too white." Military officers also voiced complaints about the flag being too white, for various reasons, such as the danger of being mistaken for a flag of truce, especially on naval ships it was too easily soiled.<sup>[13]</sup> The Columbia-based *Daily South Carolinian* observed that it was essentially a battle flag upon a flag of truce and might send a mixed message. Due to the flag's resemblance to one of truce, some Confederate soldiers cut off the flag's white portion, leaving only the canton.<sup>[31]</sup>

The first official use of the "Stainless Banner" was to drape the coffin of General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson as it lay in state in the Virginia capitol, May 12, 1863.<sup>[32][33]</sup> As a result of this first usage, the flag received the alternate nickname of the "Jackson Flag".

## Third flag: the "Blood-Stained Banner" (1865)

Third national flag (after March 4, 1865)	Third national flag as commonly manufactured, with a square canton

The third national flag (also called the "Blood-Stained Banner") was adopted March 4, 1865. The red vertical bar was proposed by Major Arthur L. Rogers, who argued that the pure white field of the Second National flag could be mistaken as a flag of truce: when hanging limp in no wind, the flag's "Southern Cross" canton could accidentally stay hidden, so the flag could mistakenly appear all white.

Rogers lobbied successfully to have this alteration introduced in the Confederate Senate. He defended his redesign as having "as little as possible of the Yankee blue", and described it as symbolizing the primary origins of the people of the Confederacy, with the salûre of the Scottish flag and the red bar from the flag of France.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Flag Act of 1865, passed by the Confederate congress near the very end of the War, describes the flag in the following language:

The Congress of the Confederate States of America do enact, That the flag of the Confederate States shall be as follows: The width two-thirds of its length, with the union (now used as the battle flag) to be in width three-fifths of the width of the flag, and so proportioned as to leave the length of the field on the side of the union twice the width of the field below it; to have the ground red and a broad blue salûre thereon, bordered with white and emblazoned with mullets or five pointed stars, corresponding in number to that of the Confederate States; the field to be white, except the outer half from the union to be a red bar extending the width of the flag.<sup>[12]</sup>

Very few of these third national flags were actually manufactured and put into use in the field, with many Confederates never seeing the flag. Moreover, the ones made by the Richmond Clothing Depot used the square canton of the second national flag rather than the slightly rectangular one that was specified by the law.<sup>[12]</sup>

## State flags

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Flag of Alabama (*obverse*)  
(January 11, 1861)



Flag of Alabama (*reverse*)  
(January 11, 1861)



Flag of Arkansas  
No flag<sup>[note 5]</sup>



Flag of Florida  
(September 13, 1861)



Flag of Georgia (*de facto*)<sup>[note 6]</sup>



Flag of Louisiana  
(February 11, 1861)



Flag of Mississippi  
(March 30, 1861)



Flag of North Carolina  
(June 22, 1861)



Flag of South Carolina  
(January 26, 1861)



Flag of Tennessee (*de facto*)<sup>[note 7]</sup>



Flag of Texas  
(January 25, 1839)



Flag of Virginia  
(April 30, 1861)

## Battle flag

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At the First Battle of Manassas, near Manassas, Virginia, the similarity between the "Stars and Bars" and the "Stars and Stripes" caused confusion and military problems. Regiments carried flags to help commanders observe and assess battles in the warfare of the era. At a distance, the two national flags were hard to tell apart.<sup>[34]</sup> Also, Confederate regiments carried many other flags, which added to the possibility of confusion.

After the battle, General P. G. T. Beauregard wrote that he was "resolved then to have [our flag] changed if possible, or to adopt for my command a 'Battle flag', which would be Entirely different from any State or Federal flag".<sup>[18]</sup> He turned to his aide, who happened to be William Porcher Miles, the former chairman of the Confederate Congress's *Committee on the Flag and Seal*. Miles described his rejected national flag design to Beauregard. Miles also told the Committee on the Flag and Seal about the general's complaints and request that the national flag be changed. The committee rejected the idea by a four-to-one vote, after which Beauregard proposed the idea of having two flags. He described the idea in a letter to his commanding General Joseph E. Johnston:

I wrote to [Miles] that we should have 'two' flags – a 'peace' or parade flag, and a 'war' flag to be used only on the field of battle – but congress having adjourned no action will be taken on the matter – How would it do us to address the War Dept. on the subject of Regimental or badge flags made of red with two blue bars crossing each other diagonally on which shall be introduced the stars, ... We would then on the field of battle know our friends from our Enemies.<sup>[18]</sup>

The flag that Miles had favored when he was chairman of the "Committee on the Flag and Seal" eventually became the battle flag and, ultimately, the Confederacy's most popular flag. According to Museum of the Confederacy Director John Coski, Miles' design was inspired by one of the many "secessionist flags" flown at the South Carolina secession convention in Charleston of December 1860. That flag was a blue St George's Cross (an upright or Latin cross) on a red field, with 15 white stars on the cross, representing the slave-holding states,<sup>[35][36]</sup> and, on the red field, palmetto and crescent symbols. Miles received various feedback on this design, including a critique from Charles Moise, a self-described "Southerner of Jewish persuasion." Moise liked the design but asked that "... the symbol of a particular religion not be made the symbol of the nation." Taking this into account, Miles changed his flag, removing the palmetto and crescent, and substituting a heraldic saltire ("X") for the upright cross. The number of stars was changed several times as well. He described these changes and his reasons for making them in early 1861. The diagonal cross was preferable, he wrote, because "it avoided the religious objection about the cross (from the Jews and many Protestant sects), because it did not stand out so conspicuously as if the cross had been placed upright thus." He also argued that the diagonal cross was "more Heraldic [*sic*] than Ecclesiastical, it being the 'saltire' of Heraldry, and significant of strength and progress."<sup>[37]</sup>

According to Coski, the Saint Andrew's Cross (also used on the flag of Scotland as a white saltire on a blue field) had no special place in Southern iconography at the time. If Miles had not been eager to conciliate the Southern Jews, his flag would have used the traditional upright "Saint George's Cross" (as used on the flag of England, a red cross on a white field). James B. Walton submitted a battle flag design essentially identical to Miles' except with an upright Saint George's cross, but Beauregard chose the diagonal cross design.<sup>[38]</sup>

Miles' flag and all the flag designs up to that point were rectangular ("oblong") in shape. General Johnston suggested making it square to conserve material. Johnston also specified the various sizes to be used by different types of military units. Generals Beauregard and Johnston and Quartermaster General Cabell approved the 12-star Confederate Battle Flag's design at the Ratcliffe home, which served briefly as Beauregard's headquarters, near Fairfax Court House in September 1861. The 12th star represented Missouri. President Jefferson Davis arrived by train at Fairfax Station soon after and was shown the design for the new battle flag at the Ratcliffe House. Hetty Cary and her sister and cousin made prototypes. One such 12-star flag resides in the collection of Richmond's Museum of the Confederacy and the other is in the Confederate Memorial Hall Museum in New Orleans.

On November 28, 1861, Confederate soldiers in General Robert E. Lee's newly reorganized Army of Northern Virginia received the new battle flags in ceremonies at Centreville and Manassas, Virginia, and carried them throughout the Civil War. Beauregard gave a speech encouraging the soldiers to treat the new flag with honor and that it must never be surrendered. Many soldiers wrote home about the ceremony and the impression the flag had upon them, the "fighting colors" boosting morale after the confusion at the Battle of First Manassas. From then on, the battle flag grew in its identification with the Confederacy and the South in general.<sup>[39]</sup> The flag's stars represented the number of states in the Confederacy. The distance between the stars decreased as the number of states increased, reaching thirteen when the secessionist factions of Kentucky and Missouri joined in late 1861.<sup>[40]</sup>

The Army of Northern Virginia battle flag assumed a prominent place post-war when it was adopted as the copyrighted emblem of the United Confederate Veterans. Its continued use by the Southern Army's post-war veteran's groups, the United Confederate Veterans (U.C.V.) and the later Sons of Confederate Veterans, (S.C.V.), and elements of the design by related similar female descendants organizations of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, (U.D.C.), led to the assumption that it was, as it has been termed, "the soldier's flag" or "the Confederate battle flag."

The square "battle flag" is also properly known as "the flag of the Army of Northern Virginia". It was sometimes called "Beauregard's flag" or "the Virginia battle flag". A Virginia Department of Historic Resources marker declaring Fairfax, Virginia, as the birthplace of the Confederate battle flag was dedicated on April 12, 2008, near the intersection of Main and Oak Streets, in Fairfax, Virginia.<sup>[41][42][43]</sup>

## Naval flags

The fledgling Confederate States Navy adopted and used several types of flags, banners, and pennants aboard all CSN ships: jacks, battle ensigns, and small boat ensigns, as well as commissioning pennants, designating flags, and signal flags.



Three versions of the flag of the Confederate States of America and the Confederate Battle Flag are shown on this printed poster from 1896. The "Stars and Bars" can be seen in the upper left. Standing at the center are Stonewall Jackson, P. G. T. Beauregard, and Robert E. Lee, surrounded by bust portraits of Jefferson Davis, Alexander Stephens, and various Confederate army officers, such as James Longstreet and A. P. Hill.



Cherokee Confederates reunion in New Orleans, 1903

The First Confederate Navy jacks, in use from 1861 to 1863, consisted of a circle of seven to fifteen five-pointed white stars against a field of "medium blue." It was flown forward aboard all Confederate warships while they were anchored in the port. One seven-star jack still exists today (found aboard the captured ironclad *CSS Atlanta*) that is actually "dark blue" in color (see illustration below, left).<sup>[44]</sup>

The Second Confederate Navy Jack was a rectangular cousin of the Confederate Army's battle flag and was in use from 1863 until 1865. It existed in a variety of dimensions and sizes, despite the CSN's detailed naval regulations. The blue color of the diagonal saltire's "Southern Cross" was much lighter than the battle flag's dark blue.<sup>[44]</sup>



The Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia



The First Confederate Navy Jack, 1861-1863



The First Confederate Navy Ensign, 1861-1863



The Second Confederate Navy Jack, 1863-1865



Battle flag of Forrest's Cavalry Corps, 1863-65. This was also known as the 'Mobile Depot' flag.



The Second Confederate Navy Ensign, 1863-1865



The Second Navy Ensign of the ironclad *CSS Atlanta*



The 9-star First Naval Ensign of the paddle steamer *CSS Curlew*



The battle flag used by the Army of the Trans-Mississippi



The 11-star Ensign of the Confederate Privateer *Jefferson Davis*



A 12-star First Confederate Navy Ensign of the gunboat *CSS Ellis*, 1861-1862



The Command flag of Captain William F. Lynch, flown as ensign of his flagship, *CSS Seabird*, 1862



Pennant of Admiral Franklin Buchanan, *CSS Tennessee*, at Battle of Mobile Bay, August 5, 1864



Digital recreation of Admiral Buchanan's pennant



Admiral's Rank flag of Franklin Buchanan, flown from *CSS Virginia* during the first day of the Battle of Hampton Roads and also flown from the *CSS Tennessee* during the Battle of Mobile Bay



Confederate naval flag, captured when General William Sherman took Savannah, Georgia, 1864

The first national flag, also known as the *Stars and Bars* (see above), served from 1861 to 1863 as the Confederate Navy's first battle ensign. It was generally made with a 2:3 aspect ratio, but a few very wide 1:2 ratio ensigns still survive today in museums and private collections. As the Confederacy grew, so did the numbers of white stars on the ensign's dark blue canton: seven-, nine-, eleven-, and thirteen-star groupings were typical. Even a few fourteen- and fifteen-starred ensigns were made to include states expected to secede but never completely joined the Confederacy.

The second national flag was later adapted as a naval ensign, using a shorter 2:3 aspect ratio than the 1:2 ratio adopted by the Confederate Congress for the national flag. This particular battle ensign was the only example taken around the world, finally becoming the last Confederate flag lowered in the Civil War; this happened aboard the commerce raider *CSS Shenandoah* in Liverpool, England, on November 7, 1865.

## National flag proposals

Hundreds of proposed national flag designs were submitted to the Confederate Congress during competitions to find a First National flag (February-May 1861) and Second National flag (April 1862; April 1863).

## First National flag proposals

When the Confederate States of America was founded during the Montgomery Convention that took place on February 4, 1861, a national flag was not selected by the Convention due to not having any proposals. President Jefferson Davis' inauguration took place under the 1861 state flag of Alabama, and the celebratory parade was led by a unit carrying the 1861 state flag of Georgia.

Realizing that they quickly needed a national banner to represent their sovereignty, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States set up the Committee on Flag and Seal of which the chairman was William Porcher Miles, who was also the Representative of South Carolina in the Confederate House of Representatives.

The Committee began a competition to find a new national flag, with an unwritten deadline being that a national flag had to be adopted by March 4, 1861, the date of President Lincoln's inauguration - which would serve to show the world the South was truly sovereign, hundreds of examples were submitted from across the Confederate States, states that were not yet Confederate states (i.e. Kentucky), and even states in the Union (such as New York). Many of the proposed designs paid homage to the Stars and Stripes, due to a nostalgia many of the new Confederate citizens felt towards the Union in early 1861, some of the homages were outright mimicry, whilst others were less obviously inspired by the Stars and Stripes, yet were still intended to pay homage to that flag.

Those inspired by the Stars and Stripes were discounted almost immediately by the Committee due to mirroring the Union's flag too closely. While others were wildly different, many of which were very complex and extravagant, these were largely discounted due to being too complicated and expensive to produce.

The winner of the competition was Nicola Marschall's "Stars and Bars" flag. The "Stars and Bars" flag was only selected by the Congress on March 4, 1861, the day of the deadline, the first flag was produced in a rush, due to the date having already been selected to host an official flag-raising ceremony, W. P. Miles credited the speedy completion of the first "Stars and Bars" flag to "Fair and nimble fingers". This flag, made of Merino, was raised by Letitia Tyler over the Alabama state capitol. The Congress inspected two other finalist designs on March 4, one was a "Blue ring or circle on a field of red", whilst the other consisted of alternating red and blue stripes with a blue canton containing stars, these two designs were lost, and we only know of them thanks to an 1872 letter sent by William Porcher Miles to P. G. T. Beauregard.

William Porcher Miles, however, was not really happy with any of the proposals. He did not share in the nostalgia for the Union that many of his fellow Southerners felt, and believed that the South's flag should be completely different to that of the North. To this end, he designed his own proposed design which featured a blue Saltier (Miles had originally planned to use a blue St. George's Cross like that of the South Carolina Sovereignty Flag he would have been familiar with, but was dissuaded from doing so) with white Fimbriation and on a field of red, within the Saltier were 7 stars, representing the then 7 states of the Confederacy, two on each of the left arms, one of each of the right arms, and one in the middle. It is possible Miles drew inspiration for this design from the second flag proposal submitted by A. Bonand of Savannah, Georgia.

However, Miles' flag was not well received by the rest of the Congress, one Congressman even mocked it as looking "like a pair of suspenders". Miles' flag lost out to that of the "Stars and Bars".



First variant of flag proposal by A. Bonand of Savannah, Georgia



Second variant of flag proposal by A. Bonand, potentially served as inspiration for Miles' flag



Flag proposal submitted by the "Ladies of Charleston"



First variant of flag proposal by L. P. Honour of Charleston, South Carolina



L. P. Honour's second variant of First national flag proposal



Confederate First national flag proposal by John Sansom of Alabama



William Porcher Miles' flag proposal, ancestor flag of the Confederate Battle Flag



John G. Gaines' First national flag proposal



Flag proposal by J. M. Jennings of Lowndesboro, Alabama



Samuel White's flag proposal



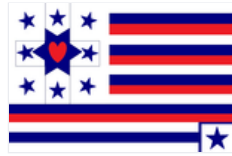
Flag proposal submitted by an unknown person of Louisville, Kentucky



One of three finalist designs examined by Congress on March 4, 1861, lost out to Stars and Bars



Second of three finalists in the Confederate First national flag competition



Confederate flag proposal by Mrs E. G. Carpenter of Cassville, Georgia



Confederate flag proposal by Thomas H. Hobbs of Chattanooga, Tennessee



Flag proposal by Eugene Wythe Baylor of Louisiana



Flag proposal submitted by "H" of South Carolina



A Confederate flag proposal by Hamilton Coupes that was submitted on February 1, 1861



The Confederate national flag proposal of Mrs Irene Riddle, wife of William T. Riddle of Eutaw, Alabama



This flag proposal was the first variant submitted by William T. Riddle of Eutaw, Alabama. Riddle submitted his flag proposals to Stephen Foster Hale on February 21, 1861.

## Flag variants

In addition to the Confederacy's national flags, a wide variety of flags and banners were flown by Southerners during the Civil War. Most famously, the "Bonnie Blue Flag" was used as an unofficial flag during the early months of 1861. It was flying above the Confederate batteries that first opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, in South Carolina beginning the Civil War. The "Van Dorn battle flag" was also carried by Confederate troops fighting in the Trans-Mississippi and Western theaters of war. Besides, many military units had their own regimental flags they would carry into battle.<sup>[45]</sup>



The "Bonnie Blue Flag"—an unofficial flag in 1861



The "Van Dorn battle flag" used in the Western theaters of operation



Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia or "Robert E. Lee Headquarters Flag"



7-star First national flag of the Confederate States Marine Corps



Flag of First Corps, Army of Tennessee



Flag of the 1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles, under General Stand Watie



Flag of the 1st Choctaw War Regiment, under Lieutenant Colonel Faunceway Baptiste



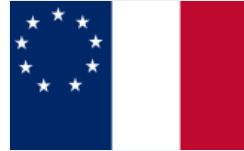
The first battle flag of the Perote Guards (Company D, 1st Regiment Alabama Infantry). Flag officially used: September 1860 – Summer, 1861



George P. Gilliss flag, also known as the Biderman Flag, the only Confederate flag captured in California (Sacramento)



The "Sibley Flag", Battle Flag of the Army of New Mexico, commanded by General Henry Hopkins Sibley.



The ensign of the Confederate States Revenue Service, designed by Dr. H. P. Capers of South Carolina on April 10, 1861.



Flag flown by Confederate Missouri regiments during the Vicksburg campaign.<sup>[46]</sup>

## Controversy

Though never having historically represented the Confederate States of America as a country, nor having been officially recognized as one of its national flags, the Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia and its variants are now flag types commonly referred to as *the Confederate Flag*. This design has become a recognized symbol of racism and white supremacy to some, especially in the Southern United States.<sup>[47][48][49]</sup> It is also known as the *rebel flag*, *Dixie flag*, and *Southern cross*. It is sometimes incorrectly referred to as *the Stars and Bars*, the name of the first national Confederate flag.<sup>[50]</sup> The "rebel flag" is considered by some to be a highly divisive and polarizing symbol in the United States.<sup>[51][52]</sup> A June 2020 Politico-Morning Consult poll of 1,995 registered voters reported that 44% viewed it as a symbol of Southern pride while 36% viewed it as a symbol of racism.<sup>[53][54]</sup> A July 2020 Quinnipiac poll showed that 55% of Southerners saw the Confederate flag as a symbol of racism, with a similar percentage for Americans as a whole.<sup>[55][56]</sup> A YouGov poll of over 34,000 Americans reported that 41% viewed the flag as representing racism, and 34% viewed it as symbolizing heritage.<sup>[57]</sup>



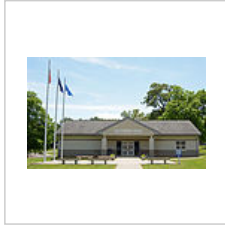
An elongated version of the Battle Flag of the Army of Tennessee, and similar to The Second Confederate Navy Jack, in use from 1863 until 1865, although with the darker blue field of the Army's battle flag.

## Gallery





Drawing in the United Confederate Veterans 1895 Sponsor souvenir album



Jefferson Davis State Historic Site & Museum. The Bonnie Blue Flag is on the right.



Confederate National flag of Fort McAllister



Battle Flag of the Emmett Rifles



Confederate National Flag captured from Fort Jackson



Battle flag of the 11th Mississippi Infantry Regiment used at Antietam



Surrender flag of the Army of Northern Virginia

## See also

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- Seal of the Confederate States

## Notes

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1. William Tappan Thompson, editor of Savannah's *Daily Morning News*, used a different nickname for the flag, calling it "The White Man's Flag", saying that the flag's white field symbolized the "supremacy of the white man". But it was a nickname that never gained traction with the public.<sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10]</sup>
2. Although the officially specified proportions were 1:2, many of the flags that actually ended up being produced used a 1.5:1 aspect ratio.<sup>[11]</sup>
3. Although the officially designated design specified a rectangular canton, many of the flags that ended up being produced utilized a square-shaped canton.<sup>[12]</sup>
4. Neither state voted to secede or ever came under full Confederate control. Nonetheless both were still represented in the Confederate Congress and had Confederate shadow governments comprised of deposed former state politicians.
5. "Neither Arkansas nor Missouri enacted legislation to adopt an official State flag" (Cannon 2005, p. 48).
6. "A surviving Georgia flag in the collection of the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond . . . places the arms on a red field" (Cannon 2005, p. 39).
7. "Despite . . . inaction of the Tennessee legislature, the flag recommended by Senator [Tazewell B.] Newman did see some limited use" (Cannon 2005, pp. 46-47).

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"Southern Confederacy" (Atlanta, Georgia), 5 Feb 1865, pg 2. Congressional, Richmond, 4 Feb: A bill to establish the flag of the Confederate States was adopted without opposition, and the flag was displayed in the Capitol today. The only change was a substitution of a red bar for one-half of the white field of the former flag, composing the flag's outer end.

## External links

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- [Confederate Flags](https://curlie.org/Society/History/By_Region/North_America/United_States/Wars/Civil_War/Confederate_Flags) ([https://curlie.org/Society/History/By\\_Region/North\\_America/United\\_States/Wars/Civil\\_War/Confederate\\_Flags](https://curlie.org/Society/History/By_Region/North_America/United_States/Wars/Civil_War/Confederate_Flags)) at Curlie
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  - [Symbols of Battle: Civil War Flags](https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/partner/symbols-of-battle-civil-war-flags) (<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/partner/symbols-of-battle-civil-war-flags>) at Google Cultural Institute
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# Flag of the United States

The **flag of the United States of America**, often referred to as the **American flag** or the **U.S. flag**, is the national flag of the United States. It consists of thirteen equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white, with a blue rectangle in the canton (referred to specifically as the "union") bearing fifty small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows, where rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternate with rows of five stars. The 50 stars on the flag represent the 50 states of the United States of America, and the 13 stripes represent the thirteen British colonies that declared independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain, and became the first states in the U.S.<sup>[2]</sup> Nicknames for the flag include the **Stars and Stripes**,<sup>[3][4]</sup> **Old Glory**,<sup>[5]</sup> and the **Star-Spangled Banner**.

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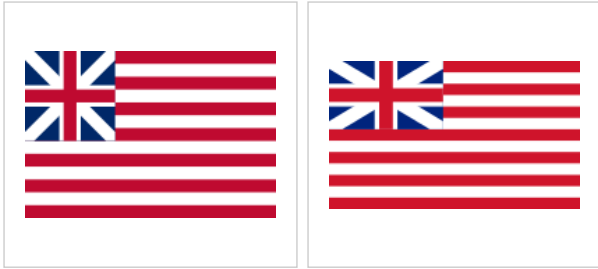


<b>Names</b>	<div> <div><div>The American flag,</div></div> <div><div>The Stars and Stripes</div></div> <div><div>Red, White, and Blue</div></div> <div><div>Old Glory</div></div> <div><div>The Star-Spangled Banner</div></div> <div><div>United States (U.S.) flag</div></div> </div>
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<b>Adopted</b>	<div> <div><div>December 3, 1775</div></div> <div><div>(Grand Union Flag)</div></div> <div><div>June 14, 1777</div></div> <div><div>(13-star version)</div></div> <div><div>July 4, 1960</div></div> <div><div>(current 50-star version)</div></div> </div>
<b>Design</b>	<div> <div><div>Thirteen horizontal stripes alternating red and white; in the canton, 50 white stars of alternating numbers of six and five per horizontal row on a blue field</div></div> </div>
<b>Designed by</b>	<div> <div><div>Robert G. Heft (50-star version)<sup>[1]</sup></div></div> </div>

## History

The current design of the U.S. flag is its 27th; the design of the flag has been modified officially 26 times since 1777. The 48-star flag was in effect for 47 years until the 49-star version became official on July 4, 1959. The 50-star flag was ordered by then president Eisenhower on August 21, 1959, and was adopted in July 1960. It is the longest-used version of the U.S. flag and has been in use for over 61 years.<sup>[6]</sup>

### First flag



The Continental Colors (aka the "Grand Union Flag")      Flag of the British East India Company, 1707–1801

At the time of the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, the Continental Congress would not legally adopt flags with "stars, white in a blue field" for another year. The flag contemporaneously known as "the Continental Colors" has historically been referred to as the first national flag.<sup>[7]</sup>

The Continental Navy raised the Colors as the ensign of the fledgling nation in the American War for Independence—likely with the expedient of transforming their previous British red ensigns by adding white stripes—and used this flag until 1777, when it formed the basis for the subsequent designs.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

The name "Grand Union" was first applied to the Continental Colors by George Preble in his 1872 history of the U.S. flag.<sup>[8]</sup>

The flag closely resembles the British East India Company flag of the era, and Sir Charles Fawcett argued in 1937 that the company flag inspired the design.<sup>[9]</sup> Both flags could have been easily constructed by adding white stripes to a British Red Ensign, one of the three maritime flags used throughout the British Empire at the time. However, an East India Company flag could have from nine to 13 stripes and was not allowed to be flown outside the Indian Ocean.<sup>[10]</sup> Benjamin Franklin once gave a speech endorsing the adoption of the company's flag by the United States as their national flag. He said to George Washington, "While the field of your flag must be new in the details of its design, it need not be entirely new in its elements. There is already in use a flag, I refer to the flag of the East India Company."<sup>[11]</sup> This was a way of symbolizing American loyalty to the Crown as well as the United States' aspirations to be self-governing, as was the East India Company. Some colonists also felt that the company could be a powerful ally in the American War of Independence, as they shared similar aims and grievances against the British government tax policies. Colonists, therefore, flew the company's flag, to endorse the company.<sup>[12]</sup>

However, the theory that the Grand Union Flag was a direct descendant of the flag of the East India Company has been criticized as lacking written evidence.<sup>[13]</sup> On the other hand, the resemblance is obvious, and a number of the Founding Fathers of the United States were aware of the East India Company's activities and of their free administration of India under Company rule.<sup>[13]</sup> In any case, both the stripes (barry) and the stars (mulletts) have precedents in classical heraldry. Mulletts were comparatively rare in early modern heraldry, but an example of mulletts representing territorial divisions predating the U.S. flag are those in the coat of arms of Valais of 1618, where seven mulletts stood for seven districts.

Another widely repeated theory is that the design was inspired by the coat of arms of George Washington's family, which includes three red stars over two horizontal red bars on a white field.<sup>[14]</sup> Despite the similar visual elements, there is "little evidence"<sup>[15]</sup> or "no evidence whatsoever"<sup>[16]</sup> to support the claimed connection with the flag design. The *Digital Encyclopedia of George Washington*, published by the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, calls it an "enduring myth" backed by "no discernible evidence."<sup>[17]</sup> The story seems to have originated with the 1876 play *Washington: A Drama in Five Acts*, by the English poet Martin Farquhar Tupper, and was further popularized through repetition in the children's magazine *St. Nicholas*.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

## Flag Resolution of 1777

On June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress passed the Flag Resolution which stated: "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."<sup>[18]</sup> Flag Day is now observed on June 14 of each year. While scholars still argue about this, tradition holds that the new flag was first hoisted in June 1777 by the Continental Army at the Middlebrook encampment.<sup>[19]</sup>

The first official U.S. flag flown during battle was on August 3, 1777, at Fort Mifflin (Fort Stanwix) during the Siege of Fort Stanwix. Massachusetts reinforcements brought news of the adoption by Congress of the official flag to Fort Mifflin. Soldiers cut up their shirts to make the white stripes; scarlet material to form the red was secured from red flannel petticoats of officers' wives, while material for the blue union was secured from Capt. Abraham Swartwout's blue cloth coat. A voucher is extant that Capt. Swartwout of Dutchess County was paid by Congress for his coat for the flag.<sup>[20]</sup>

The 1777 resolution was most probably meant to define a naval ensign. In the late 18th century, the notion of a national flag did not yet exist, or was only nascent. The flag resolution appears between other resolutions from the Marine Committee. On May 10, 1779, Secretary of the Board of War Richard Peters expressed concern "it is not yet settled what is the Standard of the United States."<sup>[21]</sup> However, the term "Standard" referred to a national standard for the Army of the United States. Each regiment was to carry the national standard in addition to its regimental standard. The national standard was not a reference to the national or naval flag.<sup>[22]</sup>

The Flag Resolution did not specify any particular arrangement, number of points, nor orientation for the stars and the arrangement or whether the flag had to have seven red stripes and six white ones or vice versa.<sup>[23]</sup> The appearance was up to the maker of the flag. Some flag makers arranged the stars into one big star, in a circle or in rows and some replaced a state's star with its initial.<sup>[24]</sup> One arrangement features 13 five-pointed stars arranged in a circle, with the stars arranged pointing outwards from the circle (as opposed to up), the so-called Betsy Ross flag. Experts have dated the earliest known example of this flag to be 1792 in a painting by John Trumbull.<sup>[25]</sup>

Despite the 1777 resolution, the early years of American independence featured many different flags. Most were individually crafted rather than mass-produced. While there are many examples of 13-star arrangements, some of those flags included blue stripes<sup>[26]</sup> as well as red and white. Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, in a letter dated October 3, 1778, to Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies, described the American flag as consisting of "13 stripes, alternately red, white, and blue, a small square in the upper angle, next to the flagstaff, is a blue field, with 13 white stars, denoting a new Constellation."<sup>[27]</sup> John Paul Jones used a variety of 13-star flags on his U.S. Navy ships including the well-documented 1779 flags of the *Serapis* and the *Alliance*. The *Serapis* flag had three

rows of eight-pointed stars with stripes that were red, white, and blue. The flag for the *Alliance*, however, had five rows of eight-pointed stars with 13 red and white stripes, and the white stripes were on the outer edges.<sup>[28]</sup> Both flags were documented by the Dutch government in October 1779, making them two of the earliest known flags of 13 stars.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Designer of the first stars and stripes

Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey, a naval flag designer, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, designed the 1777 flag<sup>[32]</sup> while he was the Chairman of the Continental Navy Board's Middle Department, sometime between his appointment to that position in November 1776 and the time that the flag resolution was adopted in June 1777. The Navy Board was under the Continental Marine Committee.<sup>[33]</sup> Not only did Hopkinson claim that he designed the U.S. flag, but he also claimed that he designed a flag for the U.S. Navy. Hopkinson was the only person to have made such a claim during his own life when he sent a letter and several bills to Congress for his work. These claims are documented in the Journals of the Continental Congress and George Hasting's biography of Hopkinson. Hopkinson initially wrote a letter to Congress, via the Continental Board of Admiralty, on May 25, 1780.<sup>[34]</sup> In this letter, he asked for a "Quarter Cask of the Public Wine" as payment for designing the U.S. flag, the seal for the Admiralty Board, the seal for the Treasury Board, Continental currency, the Great Seal of the United States, and other devices. However, in three subsequent bills to Congress, Hopkinson asked to be paid in cash, but he did not list his U.S. flag design. Instead, he asked to be paid for designing the "great Naval Flag of the United States" in the first bill; the "Naval Flag of the United States" in the second bill; and "the Naval Flag of the States" in the third, along with the other items. The flag references were generic terms for the naval ensign that Hopkinson had designed, that is, a flag of seven red stripes and six white ones. The predominance of red stripes made the naval flag more visible against the sky on a ship at sea. By contrast, Hopkinson's flag for the United States had seven white stripes, and six red ones – in reality, six red stripes laid on a white background.<sup>[35]</sup> Hopkinson's sketches have not been found, but we can make these conclusions because Hopkinson incorporated different stripe arrangements in the Admiralty (naval) Seal that he designed in the Spring of 1780 and the Great Seal of the United States that he proposed at the same time. His Admiralty Seal had seven red stripes;<sup>[36]</sup> whereas, his second U.S. Seal proposal had seven white ones.<sup>[37]</sup> Remnants of Hopkinson's U.S. flag of seven white stripes can be found in the Great Seal of the United States and the President's seal.<sup>[35]</sup> When Hopkinson was chairman of the Navy Board, his position was like that of today's Secretary of the Navy.<sup>[38]</sup> The payment was not made, most likely, because other people had contributed to designing the Great Seal of the United States,<sup>[39]</sup> and because it was determined he already received a salary as a member of Congress.<sup>[40][41]</sup> This contradicts the legend of the Betsy Ross flag, which suggests that she sewed the first Stars and Stripes flag by request of the government in the Spring of 1776.<sup>[42][43]</sup>



Francis Hopkinson's flag for the United States, an interpretation, with 13 six-pointed stars arranged in five rows<sup>[30]</sup>



Francis Hopkinson's flag for the U.S. Navy, an interpretation, with 13 six-pointed stars arranged in five rows<sup>[31]</sup>

On 10 May 1779, a letter from the War Board to George Washington stated that there was still no design established for a national standard, on which to base regimental standards, but also referenced flag requirements given to the board by General von Steuben.<sup>[44]</sup> On 3 September, Richard Peters submitted to Washington "Drafts of a Standard" and asked for his "Ideas of the Plan of the Standard," adding that the War Board preferred a design they viewed as "a variant for the Marine Flag." Washington agreed that he preferred "the standard, with the Union and Emblems in the center."<sup>[44]</sup> The drafts are lost to history but are likely to be similar to the first Jack of the United States.<sup>[44]</sup>

The origin of the stars and stripes design has been muddled by a story disseminated by the descendants of Betsy Ross. The apocryphal story credits Betsy Ross for sewing one of the first flags from a pencil sketch handed to her by George Washington. No evidence for this exists either in the diaries of George Washington or in the records of the Continental Congress. Indeed, nearly a century passed before Ross's grandson, William Canby, first publicly suggested the story in 1870.<sup>[45]</sup> By her family's own admission, Ross ran an upholstery business, and she had never made a flag as of the supposed visit in June 1776.<sup>[46]</sup> Furthermore, her grandson admitted that his own search through the Journals of Congress and other official records failed to find corroborating evidence for his grandmother's story.<sup>[47]</sup>



13-star so-called Betsy Ross variant

The family of Rebecca Young claimed that she sewed the first flag.<sup>[48]</sup> Young's daughter was Mary Pickersgill, who made the Star-Spangled Banner Flag.<sup>[49][50]</sup> She was assisted by Grace Wisher, an African American girl at just 13 years old.<sup>[51]</sup>

## Later flag acts

In 1795, the number of stars and stripes was increased from 13 to 15 (to reflect the entry of Vermont and Kentucky as states of the Union). For a time the flag was not changed when subsequent states were admitted, probably because it was thought that this would cause too much clutter. It was the 15-star, 15-stripe flag that inspired Francis Scott Key to write "Defence of Fort M'Henry", later known as "The Star-Spangled Banner", which is now the American national anthem. The flag is currently on display in the exhibition "The Star-Spangled Banner: The Flag That Inspired the National Anthem" at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History in a two-story display chamber that protects the flag while it is on view.<sup>[52]</sup>



13-star Cowpens flag variant

On April 4, 1818, a plan was passed by Congress at the suggestion of U.S. Naval Captain Samuel C. Reid<sup>[53]</sup> in which the flag was changed to have 20 stars, with a new star to be added when each new state was admitted, but the number of stripes would be reduced to 13 so as to honor the original colonies. The act specified that new flag designs should become official on the first July 4 (Independence Day) following the admission of one or more new states. The most recent change, from 49 stars to 50, occurred in 1960 when the present design was chosen, after Hawaii gained statehood in August 1959. Before that, the admission of Alaska in January 1959 prompted the debut of a short-lived 49-star flag.<sup>[54]</sup>

Prior to the adoption of the 48-star flag in 1912, there was no official arrangement of the stars in the canton, although the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy used standardized designs. Throughout the 19th century, there was an abundance of different star patterns, rectangular and circular.

On July 4, 2007, the 50-star flag became the version of the flag in the longest use, surpassing the 48-star flag that was used from 1912 to 1959.

## "Flower Flag" arrives in Asia



Oil painting depicting the 39 historical U.S. flags

The U.S. flag was brought to the city of Canton (Guǎngzhōu) in China in 1784 by the merchant ship *Empress of China*, which carried a cargo of ginseng.<sup>[55]</sup> There it gained the designation "Flower Flag" (Chinese: 花旗; pinyin: *huāqí*; Cantonese Yale: *fākei*).<sup>[56]</sup> According to a pseudonymous account first published in the *Boston Courier* and later retold by author and U.S. naval officer George H. Preble:

When the thirteen stripes and stars first appeared at Canton, much curiosity was excited among the people. News was circulated that a strange ship had arrived from the further end of the world, bearing a flag "as beautiful as a flower". Every body went to see the *kwa kee chuen* [花旗船; *Fākeisyùhn*], or "flower flagship". This name at once established itself in the language, and America is now called the *kwa kee kwoh* [花旗國; *Fākeigwok*], the "flower flag country"—and an American, *kwa kee kwoh yin* [花旗國人; *Fākeigwokyàhn*]"flower flag countryman"—a more complimentary designation than that of "red headed barbarian"—the name first bestowed upon the Dutch.<sup>[57][58]</sup>



15-star, 15-stripe Star-Spangled Banner Flag



The 48-star flag was in use from 1912 to 1959, the second longest-used U.S. flag. The current U.S. flag is the longest-used flag, having surpassed the 1912 version in 2007.

In the above quote, the Chinese words are written phonetically based on spoken Cantonese. The names given were common usage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>[59]</sup>

Chinese now refer to the United States as *Měiguó* from Mandarin (simplified Chinese: 美国; traditional Chinese: 美國). *Měi* is short for *Měilijiān* (simplified Chinese: 美利坚; traditional Chinese: 美利堅, phono-semantic matching of "American") and "guó" means "country", so this name is unrelated to the flag. However, the "flower flag" terminology persists in some places today: for example, American ginseng is called *flower flag ginseng* (simplified Chinese: 花旗参; traditional Chinese: 花旗參) in Chinese, and Citibank, which opened a branch in China in 1902, is known as *Flower Flag Bank* (花旗銀行).<sup>[59]</sup>

Similarly, Vietnamese also uses the borrowed term from Chinese with Sino-Vietnamese reading for the United States, as *Hoa Kỳ* from 花旗 ("Flower Flag"). The United States is also called *nước Mỹ* in Vietnamese before the name *Měiguó* was popular amongst Chinese.

Additionally, the seal of Shanghai Municipal Council in Shanghai International Settlement in 1869 included the U.S. flag as part of the top left-hand shield near the flag of the U.K., as the U.S. participated in the creation of this enclave in the Chinese city of Shanghai. It is also included in the badge of the Kulangsu Municipal Police in the International Settlement of Kulangsu, Amoy.<sup>[60]</sup>

The U.S. flag took its first trip around the world in 1787–90 on board the *Columbia*.<sup>[56]</sup> William Driver, who coined the phrase "Old Glory", took the U.S. flag around the world in 1831–32.<sup>[56]</sup> The flag attracted the notice of Japanese when an oversized version was carried to Yokohama by the steamer *Great Republic* as part of a round-the-world journey in 1871.<sup>[61]</sup>

## Civil War and the Flag



Prior to the Civil War, the American flag was rarely seen outside of military forts, government buildings and ships. During the American War of Independence and War of 1812 the army was not even officially sanctioned to carry the United States flag into battle. It was not until 1834 that the artillery was allowed to carry the American flag, the army would be granted to do the same in 1841. However, in 1847, in the middle of the war with Mexico, the flag was limited to camp use and not allowed to be brought into battle.<sup>[62]</sup>

This all changed following the shots at Fort Sumter in 1861. The flag that had been flying over the fort was allowed to leave with the union troops as they surrendered. It was taken across northern cities and this spurred on a wave of "Flagmania". The stars and stripes, which had no real place in the public conscious, suddenly became a part of the national identity. The flag became a symbol for the union and the sale of flags exploded at this time. In a reversal, the 1847 army regulations would be dropped and the flag was allowed to be carried into battle. Some wanted to remove the stars of the southern states that seceded but Abraham Lincoln refused believing it would give legitimacy to the confederate states.<sup>[63]</sup>

## Historical progression of designs

In the following table depicting the 28 various designs of the United States flag, the star patterns for the flags are merely the *usual* patterns, often associated with the United States Navy. Canton designs, prior to the proclamation of the 48-star flag, had no official arrangement of the stars. Furthermore, the exact colors of the flag were not standardized until 1934.<sup>[64]</sup>



Number of stars	Number of stripes	Design(s)	States represented by new stars	Dates in use	Duration
0	13		King's Colours instead of stars, red and white stripes represent Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia	December 3, 1775 <sup>[65]</sup> – June 14, 1777	1½ years
13	13		Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia	June 14, 1777 – May 1, 1795	18 years
15	15		Vermont, Kentucky	May 1, 1795 – July 3, 1818	23 years
20	13		Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi	July 4, 1818 – July 3, 1819	1 year
21	13		Illinois	July 4, 1819 – July 3, 1820	1 year
23	13		Alabama, Maine	July 4, 1820 – July 3, 1822	2 years
24	13		Missouri	July 4, 1822 – July 3, 1836 1831 term "Old Glory" coined	14 years
25	13		Arkansas	July 4, 1836 – July 3, 1837	1 year
26	13		Michigan	July 4, 1837 – July 3, 1845	8 years
27	13		Florida	July 4, 1845 – July 3, 1846	1 year
28	13		Texas	July 4, 1846 – July 3, 1847	1 year
29	13		Iowa	July 4, 1847 – July 3, 1848	1 year
30	13		Wisconsin	July 4, 1848 – July 3, 1851	3 years
31	13		California	July 4, 1851 – July 3, 1858	7 years

					
32	13		<u>Minnesota</u>	July 4, 1858 – July 3, 1859	1 year
33	13	   	<u>Oregon</u>	July 4, 1859 – July 3, 1861	2 years
34	13	 	<u>Kansas</u>	July 4, 1861 – July 3, 1863	2 years
35	13	 	<u>West Virginia</u>	July 4, 1863 – July 3, 1865	2 years
36	13	 	<u>Nevada</u>	July 4, 1865 – July 3, 1867	2 years
37	13	  	<u>Nebraska</u>	July 4, 1867 – July 3, 1877	10 years
38	13	 	<u>Colorado</u>	July 4, 1877 – July 3, 1890	13 years
43	13		<u>North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho</u>	July 4, 1890 – July 3, 1891	1 year
44	13		<u>Wyoming</u>	July 4, 1891 – July 3, 1896	5 years
45	13		<u>Utah</u>	July 4, 1896 – July 3, 1908	12 years
46	13		<u>Oklahoma</u>	July 4, 1908 – July 3, 1912	4 years
48	13		<u>New Mexico, Arizona</u>	July 4, 1912 – July 3, 1959	47 years
49	13		<u>Alaska</u>	July 4, 1959 – July 3, 1960	1 year
50	13		<u>Hawaii</u>	July 4, 1960 – present	61 years

### Possible future design of the flag

If a new U.S. state were to be admitted, it would require a new design of the flag to accommodate an additional star for a 51st state.<sup>[66]</sup>

Potential statehood candidates include U.S. territories, the national capital (Washington, D.C.), or a state created from the partition of an existing state. Residents of the District of Columbia (D.C.) and Puerto Rico have each voted for statehood in referendums (most recently in the 2016 statehood referendum in the District of Columbia<sup>[67]</sup> and the 2020 Puerto Rican status referendum<sup>[68]</sup>). Neither proposal has been approved by Congress.

In 2019, District of Columbia mayor Muriel Bowser had dozens of 51-star flags installed on Pennsylvania Avenue, the street linking the U.S. Capitol building with the White House, in anticipation of a hearing in the U.S. House of Representatives regarding potential District of Columbia statehood.<sup>[69]</sup> On June 26, 2020, the House voted to establish D.C. as the 51st state; however, the bill has not and is not expected to pass in the Senate, and the administration of President Donald Trump indicated he would veto the bill if passed by both chambers.<sup>[70][71]</sup> It died in the Republican-controlled Senate at the end of the 116th Congress.<sup>[72]</sup> On January 4, 2021, Delegate Norton reintroduced H.R. 51 early in the 117th Congress with a record 202 co-sponsors.<sup>[73][74]</sup>

According to the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry, the United States flag never becomes obsolete. Any approved American flag may continue to be used and displayed until no longer serviceable.<sup>[75]</sup>

## Symbolism

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The flag of the United States is one of the nation's most widely recognized symbols. Within the United States, flags are frequently displayed not only on public buildings but on private residences. The flag is a common motif on decals for car windows, and on clothing ornamentation such as badges and lapel pins. Throughout the world the flag has been used in public discourse to refer to the United States.<sup>[76]</sup>

The flag has become a powerful symbol of Americanism, and is flown on many occasions, with giant outdoor flags used by retail outlets to draw customers. Reverence for the flag has at times reached religion-like fervor: in 1919 William Norman Guthrie's book *The Religion of Old Glory* discussed "the cult of the flag"<sup>[77]</sup> and formally proposed vexillolatry.<sup>[78]</sup>

Despite a number of attempts to ban the practice, desecration of the flag remains protected as free speech under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Scholars have noted the irony that "[t]he flag is so revered because it represents the land of the free, and that freedom includes the ability to use or abuse that flag in protest".<sup>[79]</sup> Comparing practice worldwide, Testi noted in 2010 that the United States was not unique in adoring its banner, for the flags of Scandinavian countries are also "beloved, domesticated, commercialized and sacralized objects".<sup>[80]</sup>

This nationalist attitude around the flag is a shift from earlier sentiments; the US flag was largely a "military ensign or a convenient marking of American territory" that rarely appeared outside of forts, embassies, and the like until the opening of the American Civil War in April 1861, when Major Robert Anderson was forced to surrender Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor to Confederates. Anderson was celebrated in the North as a hero<sup>[81]</sup> and U.S. citizens throughout Northern states co-opted the national flag to symbolize U.S. nationalism and rejection of secessionism. Historian Adam Goodheart wrote:

For the first time American flags were mass-produced rather than individually stitched and even so, manufacturers could not keep up with demand. As the long winter of 1861 turned into spring, that old flag meant something new. The abstraction of the Union cause was transfigured into a physical thing: strips of cloth that millions of people would fight for, and many thousands die for.<sup>[82]</sup>

## Original intentions

The supposed symbolism of the colors red, white and blue is drawn from heraldry and was not originally intended to apply to the flag. Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress, discussing the proposed U.S. Seal, gave symbolic meanings for the colors in the seal, drawn from heraldry, with white signifying purity and innocence; red, hardiness and valor; and blue signifying vigilance, perseverance and justice. Over time, that explanation came to be associated with the flag.

Over the years, other interpretations have included that red is for the blood of patriots, spilled in the fight to protect the country. In 1986, president Ronald Reagan gave his own interpretation, saying, "The colors of our flag signify the qualities of the human spirit we Americans cherish. Red for courage and readiness to sacrifice; white for pure intentions and high ideals; and blue for vigilance and justice."<sup>[83]</sup>

## Design

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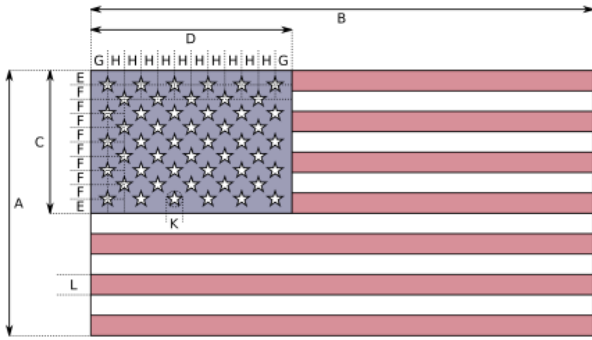
### Specifications



51-star flags have been designed and used as a symbol by supporters of statehood in various areas. Above is one possible design for a 51-star flag. It has 6 rows of alternating 9 and 8 stars.



U.S. flag being burned in protest on the eve of the 2008 election



The basic design of the current flag is specified by 4 U.S.C. § 1 (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/4/1>); 4 U.S.C. § 2 (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/4/2>) outlines the addition of new stars to represent new states, with no distinction made for the shape, size, or arrangement of the stars. Specifications for federal government use adhere to the following values:<sup>[84]</sup>

- Hoist (height) of the flag:  $A = 1.0$
- Fly (width) of the flag:  $B = 1.9$ <sup>[85]</sup>
- Hoist (height) of the canton ("union"):  $C = 0.5385$  ( $A \times 7/13$ , spanning seven stripes)
- Fly (width) of the canton:  $D = 0.76$  ( $B \times 2/5$ , two-fifths of the flag width)
- $E = F = 0.0538$  ( $C/10$ , One-tenth of the height of the canton)
- $G = H = 0.0633$  ( $D/12$ , One twelfth of the width of the canton)
- Diameter of star:  $K = 0.0616$  ( $L \times 4/5$ , four-fifths of the stripe width, the calculation only gives 0.0616 if  $L$  is first rounded to 0.077)
- Width of stripe:  $L = 0.0769$  ( $A/13$ , One thirteenth of the flag height)

These specifications are contained in an executive order which, strictly speaking, governs only flags made for or by the U.S. federal government.<sup>[86]</sup> In practice, most U.S. national flags available for sale to the public have a different width-to-height ratio; common sizes are  $2 \times 3$  ft. or  $4 \times 6$  ft. (flag ratio 1.5),  $2.5 \times 4$  ft. or  $5 \times 8$  ft. (1.6), or  $3 \times 5$  ft. or  $6 \times 10$  ft. (1.667). Even flags flown over the U.S. Capitol for sale to the public through Representatives or Senators are provided in these sizes.<sup>[87]</sup> Flags that are made to the prescribed 1.9 ratio are often referred to as "G-spec" (for "government specification") flags.

## Colors

The exact red, white, and blue colors to be used in the flag are specified with reference to the CAUS Standard Color Reference of America, 10th edition. Specifically, the colors are "White", "Old Glory Red", and "Old Glory Blue".<sup>[88]</sup> The CIE coordinates for the colors of the 9th edition of the Standard Color Card were formally specified in JOSA in 1946.<sup>[89]</sup> These colors form the standard for cloth, and there is no perfect way to convert them to RGB for display on screen or CMYK for printing. The "relative" coordinates in the following table were found by scaling the luminous reflectance relative to the flag's white.

Institute of heraldry cloth color specifications<sup>[90]</sup>

Name	Absolute						Relative										
	CIELAB $D_{65}$			Munsell			CIELAB $D_{50}$			sRGB				GRACoL 2006			
	$L^*$	$a^*$	$b^*$	$H$	$VI$	$L^*$	$a^*$	$b^*$	$R$	$G$	$B$	8-bit hex	$C$	$M$	$Y$	$K$	
White	88.7	-0.2	5.4	2.5Y	8.8/0.7	100.0	0.0	0.0	1.000	1.000	1.000	#FFFFFF	.000	.000	.000	.000	
Old Glory Red	33.9	51.2	24.7	5.5R	3.3/11.1	39.9	57.3	28.7	.698	.132	.203	#B22234	.196	1.000	.757	.118	
Old Glory Blue	23.2	13.1	-26.4	8.2PB	2.3/6.1	26.9	11.5	-30.3	.234	.233	.430	#3C3B6E	.886	.851	.243	.122	

As with the design, the official colors are only officially required for flags produced for the U.S. federal government, and other colors are often used for mass-market flags, printed reproductions, and other products intended to evoke flag colors. The practice of using more saturated colors than the official cloth is not new. As Taylor, Knoche, and Granville wrote in 1950: "The color of the official wool bunting [of the blue field] is a very dark blue, but printed reproductions of the flag, as well as merchandise supposed to match the flag, present the color as a deep blue much brighter than the official wool."<sup>[91]</sup>

Sometimes, Pantone Matching System (PMS) approximations to the flag colors are used. One set was given on the website of the U.S. embassy in London as early as 1998; the website of the U.S. embassy in Stockholm claimed in 2001 that those had been suggested by Pantone, and that the U.S. Government Printing Office preferred a different set. A third red was suggested by a California Military Department document in 2002.<sup>[92]</sup> In 2001, the Texas legislature specified that the colors of the Texas flag should be "(1) the same colors used in the United States flag; and (2) defined as numbers 193 (red) and 281 (dark blue) of the Pantone Matching System."<sup>[93]</sup> The 2012 Identity and Marking Standards published by the Department of State specify PMS 282C blue and PMS 193C red, along with the corresponding RGB and CMYK values from Adobe InDesign 6.<sup>[84]</sup>

State Department standard colors<sup>[84]</sup>

Name	PMS	RGB				CMYK			
		$R$	$G$	$B$	8-bit hex	$C$	$M$	$Y$	$K$
White		255	255	255	#FFFFFF	0	0	0	0
Old Glory Red	193 C	179	25	66	#B31942	0	100	66	13
Old Glory Blue	282 C	10	49	97	#0A3161	100	68	0	54

## 49- and 50-star unions

When [Alaska](#) and [Hawaii](#) were being considered for statehood in the 1950s, more than 1,500 designs were submitted to [President Dwight D. Eisenhower](#). Although some of them were 49-star versions, the vast majority were 50-star proposals. At least three of these designs were identical to the present design of the 50-star flag.<sup>[94]</sup> At the time, credit was given by the executive department to the [United States Army Institute of Heraldry](#) for the design.

Of these proposals, one created by 17-year-old Robert G. Heft in 1958 as a school project received the most publicity. His mother was a seamstress, but refused to do any of the work for him. He originally received a B- for the project. After discussing the grade with his teacher, it was agreed (somewhat jokingly) that if the flag were accepted by Congress, the grade would be reconsidered. Heft's flag design was chosen and adopted by presidential proclamation after Alaska and before Hawaii was admitted into the Union in 1959.<sup>[95]</sup> According to Heft, his teacher did keep to their agreement and changed his grade to an A for the project.<sup>[96]</sup> The 49- and 50-star flags were each flown for the first time at [Fort McHenry](#) on [Independence Day](#), in 1959 and 1960 respectively.<sup>[96]</sup>

## Decoration

Traditionally, the flag may be decorated with golden [fringe](#) surrounding the perimeter of the flag as long as it does not deface the flag proper. Ceremonial displays of the flag, such as those in [parades](#) or on indoor posts, often use fringe to enhance the appearance of the flag. Traditionally, the Army and Air Force use a fringed flag for parade, [color guard](#) and indoor display, while the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard use a fringeless flag for all occasions.

The first recorded use of fringe on a flag dates from 1835, and the [Army](#) used it officially in 1895. No specific law governs the legality of fringe, but a 1925 opinion of the [attorney general](#) addresses the use of fringe (and the number of stars) "... is at the discretion of the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy ..." as quoted from footnote in previous volumes of [Title 4 of the United States Code](#) law books. This opinion is a source for claims that a flag with fringe is a military ensign rather than civilian. However, according to the [Army Institute of Heraldry](#), which has official custody of the flag designs and makes any change ordered, there are no implications of symbolism in the use of fringe.<sup>[97]</sup>

Individuals associated with the [sovereign citizen movement](#) and [tax protester conspiracy arguments](#) have claimed, based on the military usage, that the presence of a fringed flag in a civilian courtroom changes the nature or jurisdiction of the court.<sup>[98][99]</sup> Federal and state courts have rejected this contention.<sup>[99][100][101]</sup>



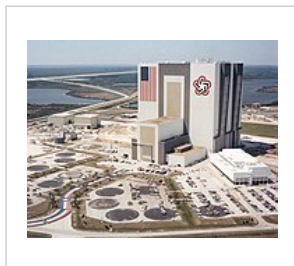
A U.S. flag with gold fringe and a gold eagle on top of the flag pole

## Display and use

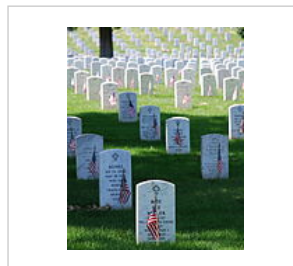
The flag is customarily flown year-round at most public buildings, and it is not unusual to find private houses flying full-size (3 by 5 feet (0.91 by 1.52 m)) flags. Some private use is year-round, but becomes widespread on civic holidays like [Memorial Day](#), [Veterans Day](#), [Presidents' Day](#), [Flag Day](#), and on [Independence Day](#). On Memorial Day it is common to place small flags by war memorials and next to the graves of U.S. war veterans. Also on Memorial Day it is common to fly the flag at half staff, until noon, in remembrance of those who lost their lives fighting in U.S. wars.



An American flag on the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw during a German air raid in September 1939



The NASA Vehicle Assembly Building in 1977. The VAB has the largest U.S. flag ever used on a building, and with the [Bicentennial Star](#) opposite the flag.



Gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery decorated with U.S. flags on Memorial Day.



A Korean American boy in San Francisco decorated with U.S. flags on Memorial Day

## Flag etiquette

The United States Flag Code outlines certain guidelines for the use, display, and disposal of the flag. For example, the flag should never be [dipped](#) to any person or thing, unless it is the [ensign](#) responding to a salute from a ship of a foreign nation. This tradition may come from the [1908 Summer Olympics](#) in London, where countries were asked to dip their flag to [King Edward VII](#): the American flag bearer did not. Team captain [Martin Sheridan](#) is famously quoted as saying "this flag dips to no earthly king", though the true provenance of this quotation is unclear.<sup>[102][103]</sup>

The flag should never be allowed to touch the ground and, if flown at night, should be illuminated. If the edges become tattered through wear, the flag should be repaired or replaced. When a flag is so tattered that it can no longer serve as a symbol of the United States, it should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning. The American Legion and other organizations regularly conduct flag retirement ceremonies, often on Flag Day, June 14. (The [Boy Scouts of America](#) recommends that modern nylon or polyester flags be recycled instead of burned, due to hazardous gases being produced when such materials are burned.)<sup>[104]</sup>

The [Flag Code](#) prohibits using the flag "for any advertising purpose" and also states that the flag "should not be embroidered, printed, or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use".<sup>[105]</sup> Both of these codes are generally ignored, almost always without comment.



The proper stationary vertical display. The union (blue box of stars) should always be in the upper-left corner.

Section 8, entitled "Respect For Flag" states in part: "The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery", and "No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform". Section 3 of the Flag Code<sup>[106]</sup> defines "the flag" as anything "by which the average person seeing the same without deliberation may believe the same to represent the flag of the United States of America". An additional provision that is frequently violated at sporting events is part (c) "The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free."<sup>[107]</sup>

Although the Flag Code is U.S. federal law, there is no penalty for a private citizen or group failing to comply with the Flag Code and it is not widely enforced—indeed, punitive enforcement would conflict with the First Amendment right to freedom of speech.<sup>[108]</sup> Passage of the proposed Flag Desecration Amendment would overrule legal precedent that has been established.

## Display on vehicles

When the flag is affixed to the right side of a vehicle of any kind (e.g.: cars, boats, planes, any physical object that moves), it should be oriented so that the canton is towards the front of the vehicle, as if the flag were streaming backwards from its hoist as the vehicle moves forward. Therefore, U.S. flag decals on the right sides of vehicles may appear to be reversed, with the union to the observer's right instead of left as more commonly seen.

The flag has been displayed on every U.S. spacecraft designed for manned flight starting from John Glenn's Friendship-7 flight in 1962, including Mercury, Gemini, Apollo Command/Service Module, Apollo Lunar Module, and the Space Shuttle.<sup>[109]</sup> The flag also appeared on the S-IC first stage of the Saturn V launch vehicle used for Apollo. But since Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo were launched and landed vertically and were not capable of horizontal atmospheric flight as the Space Shuttle did on its landing approach, the streaming convention was not followed and these flags were oriented with the stripes running horizontally, perpendicular to the direction of flight.



A tattered flag at Spokane Valley Police Headquarters, Spokane, Washington



Truck with backwards flag sticker

## Display on uniforms

On some U.S. military uniforms, flag patches are worn on the right shoulder, following the vehicle convention with the union toward the front. This rule dates back to the Army's early history, when both mounted cavalry and infantry units would designate a standard-bearer, who carried the Colors into battle. As he charged, his forward motion caused the flag to stream back. Since the Stars and Stripes are mounted with the canton closest to the pole, that section stayed to the right, while the stripes flew to the left.<sup>[110]</sup> Several US military uniforms, such as flight suits worn by members of the United States Air Force and Navy, have the flag patch on the left shoulder.<sup>[111][112]</sup>

Other organizations that wear flag patches on their uniforms can have the flag facing in either direction. The congressional charter of the Boy Scouts of America stipulates that Boy Scout uniforms should not imitate U.S. military uniforms; consequently, the flags are displayed on the right shoulder with the stripes facing front, the reverse of the military style.<sup>[113]</sup> Law enforcement officers often wear a small flag patch, either on a shoulder, or above a shirt pocket.

Every U.S. astronaut since the crew of Gemini 4 has worn the flag on the left shoulder of his or her space suit, with the exception of the crew of Apollo 1, whose flags were worn on the right shoulder. In this case, the canton was on the left.



A subdued-color flag patch, similar to style worn on the United States Army's ACU uniform. The patch is normally worn reversed on the right upper sleeve. Flag of the United States on American astronaut Neil Armstrong's space suit

## Postage stamps

The flag did not appear on U.S. postal stamp issues until the Battle of White Plains Issue was released in 1926, depicting the flag with a circle of 13 stars. The 48-star flag first appeared on the General Casimir Pulaski issue of 1931, though in a small monochrome depiction. The first U.S. postage stamp to feature the flag as the sole subject was issued July 4, 1957, Scott catalog number 1094.<sup>[114]</sup> Since that time the flag has frequently appeared on U.S. stamps.

## Display in museums

In 1907 Eben Appleton, New York stockbroker and grandson of Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead (the commander of Fort McHenry during the 1814 bombardment) loaned the Star-Spangled Banner Flag to the Smithsonian Institution, and in 1912 he converted the loan to a gift. Appleton donated the flag with the wish that it would always be on view to the public. In 1994, the National Museum of American History determined that the Star-Spangled Banner Flag

required further conservation treatment to remain on public display. In 1998 teams of museum conservators, curators, and other specialists helped move the flag from its home in the Museum's Flag Hall into a new conservation laboratory. Following the reopening of the [National Museum of American History](#) on November 21, 2008, the flag is now on display in a special exhibition, "The Star-Spangled Banner: The Flag That Inspired the National Anthem," where it rests at a 10-degree angle in dim light for conservation purposes.<sup>[52]</sup>

## Places of continuous display

By presidential proclamation, acts of Congress, and custom, U.S. flags are displayed continuously at certain locations.

- Replicas of the [Star-Spangled Banner Flag](#) (15 stars, 15 stripes) are flown at two sites in Baltimore, Maryland: [Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine](#)<sup>[115]</sup> and [Flag House Square](#).<sup>[116]</sup>
- [Marine Corps War Memorial](#) (Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima), Arlington, Virginia.<sup>[117]</sup>
- The [Battle Green](#) in [Lexington, Massachusetts](#), site of the first shots fired in the [Revolution](#)<sup>[118]</sup>
- The [White House](#), Washington, D.C.<sup>[119]</sup>
- Fifty U.S. flags are displayed continuously at the [Washington Monument](#), Washington, D.C.<sup>[120]</sup>
- At [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) Ports of Entry that are continuously open.<sup>[121]</sup>
- A Civil War era flag (for the year 1863) flies above [Pennsylvania Hall](#) (Old Dorm) at [Gettysburg College](#).<sup>[122]</sup> This building, occupied by both sides at various points of the [Battle of Gettysburg](#), served as a lookout and battlefield hospital.
- Grounds of the [National Memorial Arch](#) in [Valley Forge NHP](#), [Valley Forge](#), Pennsylvania<sup>[123]</sup>
- By custom, at the [Maryland](#) home, birthplace, and grave of [Francis Scott Key](#); at the [Worcester, Massachusetts](#) war memorial; at the plaza in [Taos, New Mexico](#) (since 1861); at the [United States Capitol](#) (since 1918); and at [Mount Moriah Cemetery](#) in [Deadwood, South Dakota](#).
- [Newark Liberty International Airport's](#) Terminal A, Gate 17 and [Boston Logan Airport's](#) Terminal B, Gate 32 and Terminal C, Gate 19 in memoriam of the events of [September 11, 2001](#).
- [Slover Mountain](#) ([Colton Liberty Flag](#)), in [Colton, California](#). July 4, 1917, to circa 1952 & 1997 to 2012.<sup>[124][125][126][127]</sup>
- At the ceremonial [South Pole](#) as one of the 12 flags representing the signatory countries of the original Antarctic Treaty.
- On the Moon: six manned missions successfully landed at various locations and each had a flag raised at the site. Exhaust gases when the Ascent Stage launched to return the astronauts to their [Command Module Columbia](#) for return to Earth blew over the flag the [Apollo 11](#) mission had placed.<sup>[128]</sup>

## Particular days for display

The flag should especially be displayed at full staff on the following days:<sup>[129]</sup>

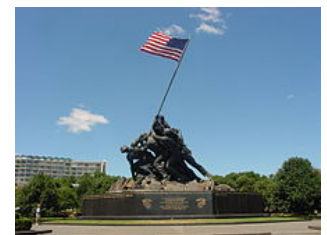
- January: 1 ([New Year's Day](#)), third Monday of the month ([Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#)), and 20 ([Inauguration Day](#), once every four years, which, by tradition, is postponed to the 21st if the 20th falls on a Sunday)
- February: 12 ([Lincoln's birthday](#)) and the third Monday (legally known as [Washington's Birthday](#) but more often called [Presidents' Day](#))
- March–April: [Easter Sunday](#) (date varies)
- May: Second Sunday ([Mothers Day](#)), third Saturday ([Armed Forces Day](#)), and last Monday ([Memorial Day](#); half-staff until noon)
- June: 14 ([Flag Day](#)), third Sunday ([Fathers Day](#))
- July: 4 ([Independence Day](#)) and 27 ([National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day](#))<sup>[130]</sup>
- September: First Monday ([Labor Day](#)), 17 ([Constitution Day](#)), and last Sunday ([Gold Star Mother's Day](#))<sup>[131]</sup>
- October: Second Monday ([Columbus Day](#)) and 27 ([Navy Day](#))
- November: 11 ([Veterans Day](#)) and fourth Thursday ([Thanksgiving Day](#))
- December: 25 ([Christmas Day](#))
- and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the [birthdays of states](#) (date of admission); and on state holidays.<sup>[132]</sup>

## Display at half-staff

The flag is displayed at half-staff ([half-mast](#) in naval usage) as a sign of respect or mourning. Nationwide, this action is proclaimed by the president; statewide or territory-wide, the proclamation is made by the governor. In addition, there is no prohibition against municipal governments, private businesses or citizens flying the flag at half-staff as a local sign of respect and mourning. However, many flag enthusiasts feel this type of practice has somewhat diminished the meaning of the original intent of lowering the flag to honor those who held high positions in federal or state offices. President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) issued the first proclamation on March 1, 1954, standardizing the dates and time periods for flying the flag at half-staff from all federal buildings, grounds, and naval vessels; other congressional resolutions and presidential proclamations ensued. However, they are only guidelines to all other entities: typically followed at state and local government facilities, and encouraged of private businesses and citizens.



Flags depicted on U.S. postage stamp issues



[Marine Corps War Memorial](#), Arlington, Virginia



Flags covering the [National Mall](#)



The [New York Stock Exchange](#) at Christmas time

To properly fly the flag at half-staff, one should first briefly hoist it top of the staff, then lower it to the half-staff position, halfway between the top and bottom of the staff. Similarly, when the flag is to be lowered from half-staff, it should be first briefly hoisted to the top of the staff.<sup>[133]</sup>

Federal statutes provide that the flag should be flown at half-staff on the following dates:

- May 15: Peace Officers Memorial Day (unless it is the third Saturday in May, Armed Forces Day, then full-staff)<sup>[134]</sup>
- Last Monday in May: Memorial Day (until noon)
- September 11: Patriot Day<sup>[135]</sup>
- First Sunday in October: Start of Fire Prevention Week, in honor of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service.<sup>[136][137]</sup>
- December 7: National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day<sup>[138]</sup>
- For 30 days: Death of a president or former president
- For 10 days: Death of a vice president, Supreme Court chief justice/retired chief justice, or speaker of the House of Representatives.
- From death until the day of interment: Supreme Court associate justice, member of the Cabinet, former vice president, president *pro tempore* of the Senate, or the majority and minority leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives. Also for federal facilities within a state or territory, for the governor.
- On the day after the death: Senators, members of Congress, territorial delegates or the resident commissioner of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, on July 27, was formerly a day of half-staff observance until the law expired in 2003. In 2009, it became a day of full-staff observance.<sup>[130][139]</sup>

## Folding for storage

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Though not part of the official Flag Code, according to military custom, flags should be folded into a triangular shape when not in use. To properly fold the flag:

1. Begin by holding it waist-high with another person so that its surface is parallel to the ground.
2. Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise over the field of stars, holding the bottom and top edges securely.
3. Fold the flag again lengthwise with the blue field on the outside.
4. Make a rectangular fold then a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open top edge of the flag, starting the fold from the left side over to the right.
5. Turn the outer end point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle.
6. The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in this manner (usually thirteen triangular folds, as shown at right). On the final fold, any remnant that does not neatly fold into a triangle (or in the case of exactly even folds, the last triangle) is tucked into the previous fold.
7. When the flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible.



Folding the U.S. flag

There is also no specific meaning for each fold of the flag. However, there are scripts read by non-government organizations and also by the Air Force that are used during the flag folding ceremony. These scripts range from historical timelines of the flag to religious themes.<sup>[140][141]</sup>

## Use in funerals

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Traditionally, the flag of the United States plays a role in military funerals,<sup>[142]</sup> and occasionally in funerals of other civil servants (such as law enforcement officers, fire fighters, and U.S. presidents). A burial flag is draped over the deceased's casket as a pall during services. Just prior to the casket being lowered into the ground, the flag is ceremonially folded and presented to the deceased's next of kin as a token of respect.<sup>[143]</sup>

## Surviving historical flags

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A flag prepared for presentation to the next of kin



An American flag now flies over Gate 17 of Terminal A at Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark, New Jersey, departure gate of United Airlines Flight 93 on 9/11.



Name	Flag	Description	Historical significance
Forster Flag		Red field with 13 stripes in its corner, 6 on one side (obverse) 7 on the other (reverse)	Earliest surviving flag depicting the 13 colonies with stripes. This flag was used by the Manchester militia during the battle of Lexington in 1775. <sup>[144]</sup>
Washington's Headquarters Flag		2 x 3 ft. blue silk flag with 13 white, 6 pointed stars arranged in a 3-2-3-2-3 pattern	This flag, currently in possession of the Museum of the American Revolution, is claimed to have been used by George Washington during the Revolution. <sup>[145]</sup>
Fort Independence Flag		6 x 9 ft. Flag with 13 stripes and a blue canton with stars formed in a 4-5-4 pattern.	One of the few surviving American flags from the revolution, this flag, made in 1781, was said to have been flown over Fort Independence in the late 18th century. <sup>[146]</sup>
Star-Spangled Banner Flag		30 x 34 ft. (Currently) flag with 15 stripes, 14 stars (one missing)  Stars are arranged in a staggered 3-3-3-3-3 pattern	Flag that flew over Fort McHenry during a British bombardment in the War of 1812. This flag is depicted by Francis Scott Key in the song "Star-Spangled Banner" which would later become the national anthem of the United States. <sup>[147]</sup>
"Old Glory" Flag		12 x 24 ft. American Flag with 34 stars (added later) and an anchor in the bottom right of the canton.	This flag was the first American Flag to be given the name "Old Glory". The flag was made in 1824 and was a gift to William Driver, a sea captain, by his mother. He named the flag 'Old Glory' and took it with him during his time at sea. In 1861 the flag's original stars were replaced with 34 new ones and an anchor was added in the corner of the canton. During the Civil war, Driver hid his flag until Nashville became under union hands, to which he flew the flag above the Tennessee capitol building. <sup>[148]</sup>
Matthew Perry Expedition Flag		Mid-19th century American Naval Ensign with 31 white stars arranged in a linear pattern.	On July 14, 1853 this flag was raised over Uraga, Japan during the Perry Expedition, in doing so it became the first American Flag to officially fly in mainland Japan. In 1855 it was presented to the US Naval Academy. In 1913 it received a linen backing during preservation treatments by Amelia Fowler, who would also work on restoring the Star-Spangled Banner. Nearly a century after its historic voyage to Japan, in 1945 the flag once again returned and was present at the formal surrender of Japan on board the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945. Owing to its condition it had to be presented on its reverse side. Today the flag is in the possession of the US Naval Academy. <sup>[149]</sup>
Fort Sumter Flag		Large military storm flag with 33 stars arranged in a diamond pattern.	During the bombardment of Fort Sumter in April 1861, the pole this flag was on was hit by artillery fire. The flag was raised again from a makeshift pole but was taken down after the union garrison surrendered. Before departing, it was agreed that the union artillery could fire a gun salute for the flag. The flag was taken by the union commander of the fort and was shown extensively throughout the north. This flag quickly spurred on wave of what can be called "flagmania" in the north as the American flag began to become much more prominent in Americans lives. Four years after the flag had come down from the fort it once again flew over the fort on April 14, 1865. Later that day Abraham Lincoln would be assassinated. <sup>[150]</sup>
Lincoln assassination Flag		36 star American flag with blood of Abraham Lincoln visible on its 8th, 9th and 10th stripe.	This flag was placed under the head of President Abraham Lincoln following his fatal shooting while he was still in the presidential box. <sup>[151]</sup>
Little Big Horn Guidon		27.5 by 33 in. Silk Guidon flag with 34 gold painted stars (one missing) arranged in a circle.	This guidon was used by the 7th US Cavalry during the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. The battle is infamous, for all US cavalry troops engaged in battle were killed, including Lt. Col George A. Custer. This flag was discovered by Sgt. Ferdinand Culbertson under the body of one of the slain soldiers. <sup>[152]</sup> In 2010, this flag was sold for \$2.2 million. <sup>[153]</sup>

		<p>Stained blood from the battle might also be on the flag.</p>	
<p>Iwo Jima Flag</p>		<p>4.67 x 8 ft. 48 star American flag with fly end torn.</p>	<p>This American flag was raised above Mount Suribachi during the <u>Battle of Iwo Jima</u> in WW2. The photo of this flag being raised by US Marines was captured in the 1945 Pulitzer Prize winning photo "<u>Raising the flag on Iwo Jima</u>".<sup>[154]</sup></p>
<p>First American Flag in space</p>		<p>23 x 36 in. 50 star American Flag made of cloth.</p>	<p>This American Flag flew on the Freedom-7 mission to space, becoming the first American flag to leave the Earth's atmosphere. The flag was a last minute addition after a local student council president asked a reporter if this flag could be taken on board. The reporter took it to the head of the NASA space task group to which he agreed. In 1995, the flag was taken to space once again for commemorating the 100th American manned space mission.<sup>[155]</sup></p>
<p>"Raising the Flag at Ground Zero" Flag</p>		<p>3 x 5 ft. 50 star American Flag</p>	<p>Following the collapse of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, this flag, which had been on board a yacht, was attached and raised on a tilted flag pole by three members of the New York City Fire Department, Dan McWilliams, Billy Eisengrein, and George Johnson. This event was photographed and helped boost morale, similar to the "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima" photo.<sup>[156]</sup> It is currently in the possession of the <u>9/11 Memorial &amp; Museum</u>.</p>

## Related flags

- The flag of Bikini Atoll is symbolic of the islanders' belief that a great debt is still owed to the people of Bikini because in 1954 the United States government detonated a thermonuclear bomb on the island as part of the Castle Bravo test.<sup>[157]</sup>
- The Republic of the United States of Brazil briefly used a flag inspired by the U.S. flag between 15-19 November 1889, proposed by the lawyer Ruy Barbosa. The flag had 13 green and yellow stripes, as well as a blue square with 21 white stars for the canton. The flag was vetoed by the then provisional president of Brazil citing concerns that it looked too similar to the American flag.<sup>[158]</sup>
- The flag of Liberia bears a close resemblance, showing the origin of the country in free people of color from North America and primarily the United States.<sup>[159]</sup> The Liberian flag has 11 similar red and white stripes, which stand for the 11 signers of the Liberian Declaration of Independence, as well as a blue square with only a single large white star for the canton. The flag is the only current flag in the world modeled after and resembling the American flag, as Liberia is the only nation in the world that was founded, colonized, established, and controlled by settlers who were free people of color and former slaves from the United States and the Caribbean aided and supported by the American Colonization Society beginning in 1822.<sup>[160]</sup>
- Despite Malaysia having no historical connections with the U.S., the flag of Malaysia greatly resembles the U.S. flag. It is possible that the flag of the British East India Company influenced both the Malaysian and U.S. flag.<sup>[9]</sup>
- The flag of El Salvador from 1865 to 1912. A different flag was in use, based on the flag of the United States, with a field of alternating blue and white stripes and a red canton containing white stars.<sup>[161]</sup>
- The flag of Brittany was inspired in part by the American flag.<sup>[162]</sup>

## See also

- Ensign of the United States
- Flags of the Confederate States
- Flags of the United States of America
- Flags of the United States Armed Forces
- Flags of the U.S. states
- Flags of United States cities
- Fort Sumter Flag
- Nationalism in the United States

## Article sections

- Colors, standards and guidons: United States
- Flag desecration: United States

## Associated people

- Robert Anderson (1805–1871), lowered the Fort Sumter Flag, which became a national symbol, and he a hero
- Francis Bellamy (1855–1931), creator of the Pledge of Allegiance
- Thomas E. Franklin (1966–present), photographer of *Ground Zero Spirit*, better known as *Raising the Flag at Ground Zero*
- Christopher Gadsden (1724–1805), after whom the Gadsden flag is named
- Jasper Johns (born 1930), painter of *Flag* (1954–55), inspired by a dream of the flag
- Katha Pollitt (1949–present), author of a controversial essay on post-9/11 America and her refusal to fly a U.S. flag
- George Preble (1816–1885), author of *History of the American Flag* (1872) and photographer of the Fort McHenry flag
- Joe Rosenthal (1911–2006), photographer of *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*

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## External links

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  - [Executive Order No. 10798 \(https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10834.html\)](https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10834.html), with specifications and regulations for the current flag
  - [July 1942: United We Stand \(http://americanhistory.si.edu/1942/index.html\)](http://americanhistory.si.edu/1942/index.html) – [National Museum of American History](#) online exhibition highlighting some 500 magazines featuring the American flag on their cover during World War II
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