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A Short History of Our Flag. The Star Spangled Banner.

THE English flag was the flag of our country for more than one hundred and fifty years. The Colonies (now states) often used devices of their own; in-asmuch, however, as the symbols of the colonies, regiments and ships were so different, Washington, in 1775 wrote, "Please fix on some flag, by which our vessels may know each other." The first striped flag was raised at Washington's headquarters, Cambridge, Mass., Jan. 2nd 1776, and saluted with thirteen guns.

In 1777 Congress appointed a committee consisting of Genl. Washington, Robt. Morris and Col. Ross, "to designate a suitable flag for the nation." This committee, as all the world knows, conferred with Mistress Betsy Ross, and afterwards recommended a flag in which the stripes recently introduced were retained, but in which the crosses, the symbol of British authority, gave place to the stars which were henceforth to shine for liberty.

On June 14th 1777, in old Independence Hall, Phila., Congress adopted the following resolution: "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, the stars to be arranged in a circle."

The stars and stripes was first used in actual military service at Fort Stanwix, re-named Fort Schuyler, now Rome, N. Y., on August 6th 1777, and first carried in battle at a skirmish at Cooch's Bridge, near Wilmington, Delaware Sept. 3rd 1777. On Feb. 14th 1778, Captain Paul Jones had the satisfaction of seeing the Stares and Stripes "recognized for the first time by the flag of France," by salutes first to the "Ranger" and later to the "Independence" of Jones' fleet.

The flag was not changed until 1795, when two stripes and two stars were added for Vermont and Kentucky. By 1816 four more states, Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana and Indiana were in the family. Realizing that there must be a limit to the stripes, a committee was appointed and made the recommendation, which was adopted April 4th 1818, that the flag be permanently thirteen stripes, representing the original thirteen states, and that a new star be added for each state as admitted.

The plan of arranging the stars to form one large star was abandoned at that time and the method of placing them in rows was adopted, since then a star has been added to the flag on the Fourth of July following the admission of a state to the Union. The flag of the United States at the time of the Revolution had thirteen stars: in the War of 1812 fifteen stars: in the Mexican War twenty-nine: in the Civil War thirty-five: and in the Spanish-American War forty-five, the number to day, with Oklahoma getting ready for her reception as star number forty-six.

The Star Spangled Banner.

The history of the "Star Spangled Banner," is practically as follows:

In 1814, during the War with Great Britain, Admiral Cockburn with his fleet entered the Chesapeake Bay and announced that he proposed to retaliate for "wanton destruction" committed by the American Army in upper Canada. He landed a force of 5000 men commanded by Genl. Ross, entered Washington and burned the Capitol, White House and other public buildings. When the inhabitants of Baltimore heard the news about Washington, they immediately fortified Fort McHenry, and prepared to make a stubborn resistance. On their way back from Washington, the British soldiers arrested Dr. William Beanes, an old and prominent resident of Upper Marlborough. Francis Scott Key who had gained fame as an attorney and statesman, and had a prominent part in the affairs of his state, (Maryland) was an intimate friend of Dr. Beanes, and hearing of his arrest, got permission from President Madison to attempt his release. He hastened to Baltimore, and in company with John S. Skinner on a small vessel, under a flag of truce, visited Admiral Cockburn, whose fleet was then in the Chesapeake, Admiral Cockburn having learned that Dr. Beanes at one time had been humane and help al to several wounded British officers, announced that he would release Dr. Beanes, but that he would have to detain Key and Skinner a little while, as a certain important event was pending, which soon transpired to be, the contemplated destruction of Fort McHenry, which guarded the city. On Tuesday morning Sept. 13th 1814, the fleet moved up the Chesapeake and arranged itself in a semi-circular form, and made ready to demolish the little Fort. When all things were ready, Key, Skinner and Dr. Beanes were put aboard their own vessel, but were kept under a guard of sailors and marines. Then the bombardment began. All day long shot and shell rained on the fort, and its brave defenders. The British were surprised at the resistance, and at sunset they determined to keep it right up through the night. At midnight the fleet moved nearer and redoubled its fire, the little fort answered back gun for gun. So the long dreadful night passed away, and in the morning, "by the dawn's early light," the anxious eyes of the three Americans strained towards the fort saw that "the flag was still there." It was there! Thank God, it was still there! Francis Scott Key, on the back of an envelope, then and there, in a burst of patriotic fervor, wrote the song, "The Star Spangled Banner" which tells its own story, and which has become as deathless as the flag itself. While the flag is known, as the Star Spangled Banner, it may well be known also, as THE TRIUMPHANT BANNER, inasmuch as it is the flag that has never known defeat.

NOTE:-The author is indebted to N. W. Ayer & Son's Advertising Agency Phila. Pa., for historical facts given above as contained in a very beautiful booklet issued by them entitled "My Flag." Very Respectfully,

E. T. PAULL.

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The Triumphant Banner. March Two Step.





Triumphant Banner. 5







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