



The Story of the Flag: The Amazing History of the Stars & Stripes

Audiobook Transcription

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I

Every flag made is an emblem of something. It has a meaning all its own, and no other flag stands for just the very same thing.

Every American, old or young, and every person who comes from other countries to live in America, ought to know the history of the United States flag. It is not enough to admire it, to think it bright and beautiful. They should all love it. They should all respect it. When they have learned, fully, what it means and just what it stands for, I am sure that no other flag in the world will be so dear to them.

In this little book I am going to tell you its story. But, first, I want to say something about flags that

were in use long before our own dear “Star-Spangled Banner” was even thought of.

Nobody knows just when people first began to make flags. It was hundreds—perhaps thousands—of years ago. And then, as now, flags were employed for many different purposes.

Emperors, kings, chiefs of savage tribes, military companies, cities, towns, and religious societies made use of various emblems, or devices, in early times, and such emblems were very helpful. They enabled the people of one clan, or race, to recognize the people of another. Displayed upon battlefields, they showed plainly the position of the different military leaders and troops of horsemen and footmen. Placed upon towers, walls, and gates, they told the names of cities, towns, and castles. Borne by vessels, they signified where the vessels belonged, whether they were war or merchant ships, and what sort of people were on board them. Often they were symbols of the religion of those who adopted them.

To give you an idea of what these emblems were like, I will mention a few of them. The ancient city of Athens, in Greece, had the owl for its device, while ancient Rome displayed the eagle. The early Danes chose the raven for their symbol, and the ancient Saxtons used a white horse. The early Christians adopted the cross, and the followers of Mohammed selected the crescent. Emblems were often fastened to long poles, or lances, and were then called standards. They were carried in armies by men known as standard bearers, who were selected for superior courage. The standard bearer would sacrifice his life rather than surrender the standard. Warriors would follow their standards into the greatest dangers.

Emblems were also painted and embroidered on flags, and flags and standards were used for similar purposes. Sometimes the flags were suspended from the standards, and that is why flags are often called standards now. They were of many shapes and sizes, and each kind had a meaning. In the days of knighthood the flag of a person of high rank could not be used by a person of a lower station.

The flag bearer, like the standard bearer, was expected to defend his flag with his life. In ancient Rome, a bearer who lost his flag, or surrendered it to an enemy, was put to death. Soldiers pledged allegiance to their country on flags. When you salute the American flag in your schoolroom, you are following the example set hundreds of years ago by the Roman soldiers.

It would be interesting to know who first planted, or waved, a flag in what is now the United States. A Dutch traveler who visited the New Netherlands (New York) in 1640 speaks of the emblems used by Indian tribes of that section—the bear, the wolf, and the tortoise. “These Indians,” he says, “have upon their banners the animals after which they are named, and when they go to war carry them as a sign of terror to their enemies, as they suppose, and of courage to themselves.” He does not describe the banners, but they were, probably, of skin with figures painted on them. He does not state whether the Indians borrowed the idea of banners from the white people, or whether they had always been acquainted with the use of them.

There is very little doubt that the Norsemen, or Northmen (people of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark), visited the shores of New England long before Christopher Columbus was born. These Norsemen were bold and hardy seamen who roved the ocean in long ships moved by sails and oars, and having the carved figures of dragons at their prows. The banner of the Norsemen, in early times, was of white silk and had embroidered upon it a raven with an open beak and outspread wings. The Norsemen believed that their great god, Odin, had two ravens, Hugin and Munin, which flew every day all over the world, and at night reported to him all that they saw and heard. It is highly probable that this Norse banner

with its sacred emblem was, at some period, brought to New England, for the Northmen made many voyages to our coasts. And, as they thought that their flag brought them good luck, it is probable that they carried it with them wherever they went.

When Columbus landed on American soil he unfurled two flags, and it is interesting to know exactly what both of them were like.

First, there was the royal standard of Spain. Spain comprised the two kingdoms of Castile and Leon, and the emblems, or arms, of both were represented on the banner. Two golden castles on fields of red stood for Castile, and were alternated with two red lions on white fields, standing for Leon.

The other banner, called the “Flag of the Expedition,” was pure white and of a “swallow-tailed” form. In its center was a green cross; green signifying hope, and the cross being the symbol of Christianity. Just beneath the arms of the cross were two golden crowns. Under one of these was the letter F, the initial of King Ferdinand's name. Below the other was the letter Y, the initial of Queen Isabella's name (Ysabel). We may well imagine that the Indians of San Salvador island gazed upon these two banners with wide open, wondering eyes.

In 1497, John Cabot made a voyage to America as commander of a fleet of English ships sent out by King Henry VII to make discoveries. Cabot was a native of Venice, Italy, and when he returned from his expedition he reported that he had set up a cross and the flags of England and Venice in the countries he had visited. We know that John Cabot discovered the mainland of America, and it is supposed that he planted the flags and the cross in the barren regions of Labrador. The English flag of 1497 is thought to have been white, with a red cross—called the cross of Saint George—extending its entire length and width. The Venetian banner was bright scarlet with a band of blue near its edge. Saint Mark was considered the patron saint of Venice, so the flag was decorated with his symbol—a golden, winged lion, holding a cross in his right paw. Numerous European explorers followed Columbus and the Cabots to America. English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Swedish colonies were planted on its shores at very early dates.

It is believed that Jacques Cartier was the first to unfurl the French standard on this continent. In 1535 he set up a cross and the arms of France near where now stands the city of Quebec, in Canada. It is thought that the flag used by him was blue, and bore the design of three golden *fleur-de-lis*. Some of the French settlers who later came to America were Protestants called Huguenots. At first the Huguenots used three golden lilies but afterward they adopted a white flag.

Henry Hudson, an Englishman employed by the Dutch, sailed his ship, the “Half Moon,” into New York harbor in 1609. From the mast of the ship floated the flag of the Dutch East India Company, which consisted of three wide horizontal stripes, one orange color, one white, and one blue, with the letters V.O.C.A. in the center of the white stripe. In 1621 the Dutch West India Company came into control of the New Netherlands, as the Dutch colonies in America were called. Then the letters V.O.C.A. were taken from the flag and the letters G.W.C. were put in their place. After a while the orange stripe was discarded and a red one was used instead.

From 1638 to 1655 the Swedish standard waved over a colony planted on the Delaware River by Swedes and Finns. The Swedish flag showed a yellow cross on a blue ground. Finally the Dutch drove the Swedes and Finns away, and set up their own banner in place of that of Sweden. Last came the

English, in 1664, and took possession of the New Netherlands, hauling down the Dutch colors and hoisting those of England. In 1673 the Dutch again came into power, but not for long. Once more their ensign was lowered and the English flag run up in its place, where it remained until the War of the Revolution.

The “Cross of Saint George” waved over all English settlements in Virginia, New England, Maryland, Delaware, Carolina, New Jersey, and Georgia. This, as has been said, was the flag of England. There was another flag called “the king's flag,” which vessels flew. The “king's flag,” or “king's colors,” bore the red cross of Saint George, the patron saint of England, and the white, diagonal cross of Saint Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. It was adopted soon after England and Scotland became united as one kingdom under James I.

The Puritans, who settled Massachusetts Bay Colony, did not regard the symbol of the cross with much favor. They had been persecuted in England for their religious beliefs, and they felt it was wrong for them to pay respect to an emblem held sacred by the English Church. So, in the year 1634, Governor John Endicott, a stern and fearless man, cut out a part of the red cross from a flag used by the military company at Salem. For this offense Endicott was forbidden to hold public office for the term of one year, although the cutting of the flag was done because of religious scruples, not to show disrespect to the English government.

In 1643 the three colonies, Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Connecticut, formed a league under the name of “The United Colonies of New England.” Several years later (1686) they adopted a common flag, the cross of Saint George with a golden crown and the monogram of King George II emblazoned on its center.

The New England colonies began at a very early date to make use of other flags besides those of England. In 1659 a company of calvary was raised in the three Massachusetts counties of Essex, Suffolk, and Middlesex. This company was known as the “Three County Troop,” and had its own ensign of silver-fringed crimson silk, bearing the design of an arm holding a drawn sword, above it being a scroll inscribed with the name of the company.

A company commanded by Captain Thomas Noyes of Newbury, Mass., in 1684 used a flag having a green ground, the canton displaying the cross of Saint George.

What is known as the “Pine Tree Flag” came into use in Massachusetts as early as 1704. There were two forms of this flag. One had a red ground with the cross of Saint George in the canton, having a green pine tree in the first quarter. The other had a blue ground. Sometimes the figure of a hemisphere took the place of the pine tree, but the pine was the favorite symbol.

Massachusetts also imprinted the pine tree on coins which were made in the colony. It is related that King Charles II of England became very angry when one of these coins was shown to him. He considered that Massachusetts was very bold, indeed, to set up a flag and a mint without asking his royal permission. He inquired what the figure of the tree—which was very rudely stamped—was intended to represent, and was told that it probably stood for the oak in whose branches he had hidden after the battle of Worcester to save himself from capture by his enemies. The king believing this, forgot his anger and declared that the colonists were, after all, “a parcel of honest dogs.”

II

During the trouble between England and France, known as the French and Indian Wars, in which the American colonists took such an active part, several different flags were used. The troops who engaged in the expedition against Louisburg in 1745 carried a banner inscribed, "*Nil desperandum, Christo duce,*" which translated means, "Never despair, Christ leads us." In August, 1760, an engagement took place between the English and French at a spot near what is now Ogdensburg, N.Y., on the St. Lawrence River. The English war vessels, three in number, flew flags bearing upon them figures of Indians.

The passage of the Stamp Act by the British government in 1765 was the beginning of the trouble between England and her American colonies. From that date until June 1777, when the United States Congress adopted the national standard, flags of many kinds made their appearance in different sections of our country.

Determined to resist the Stamp Act, the colonists raised liberty poles everywhere. A flag flying from one in New York had the word "Liberty" upon it. In New Hampshire one bore the legend, "Liberty, Property, and no Stamps." The patriotic citizens of Charleston, South Carolina, captured a fort in which the stamp paper had been placed by the king's officers, and hoisted over it a flag of their own, blue with three silver crescents upon it. The "Sons of Liberty" of Boston held meetings under a "liberty tree," above whose leafy top a red flag waved in the breeze. When the Stamp Act was repealed, March, 1766, there was great rejoicing in America. At New York City the people raised a liberty pole with a banner having the words, "The King, Pitt, and Liberty." William Pitt was a British statesman who was very friendly to the colonies. It was owing to him that the act was repealed. You will find the whole story of the Stamp Act in your United States histories.

The banners used by the American patriots during the Revolution make a very interesting study. What is supposed to be the oldest in existence may be seen at the Bedford, Mass., Public Library. It was carried by the Bedford Minute Men at the Concord fight, April 19, 1775. This flag is a maroon color and displays an outstretched arm, the hand grasping an upraised sword. Crossing the sword blade is a scroll inscribed, "*Vince Aut Moriri,*" which means "Conquer or Die." Near the arms are silver circles which are supposed to represent cannon balls. The arm and sword are also of silver. The scroll is gilt.

The flag of the Philadelphia Troop of Light Horse (1775) had a canton displaying thirteen alternate blue and silver stripes. Its ground was yellow with an elaborate device in the center. This ancient flag is still carefully preserved.

It is supposed that the "Pine Tree Flag" was used during the Battle of Bunker Hill. Soon after that event the Connecticut troops were supplied with standards of different colors. That of the 1st regiment was yellow; of the 2^d, blue; of the 3^d, scarlet; of the 4th, crimson; of the 5th, white; of the 6th, azure; of the 7th, blue; of the 8th, orange. On each flag were the arms of the colony and a Latin motto signifying, "God, who transported us hither will support us."

The rattlesnake became a favorite device all over the country. One "Rattlesnake Flag" had thirteen alternate stripes of red and blue, with a mottled black and white snake crossing it diagonally. Another, used in South Carolina, had a yellow ground with a coiled snake in the center, and beneath it the words,

“Don't Tread on Me.”

At Poughkeepsie, N.Y., the Patriots' flag, in 1775, was inscribed on one side, “The King,” and on the other, “The Congress and Liberty.” A flag at New York City had the words, “Geo. Rex and the Liberties of America.” Few people at this date had seriously thought of the colonies separating from Great Britain. They wanted their liberties and were determined to secure them, but they were still loyal to King George III.

In July, 1775, a standard presented to General Israel Putnam was unfurled to the air. It was a red flag of the Third Connecticut Regiment, and, besides the motto already describes, bore the words, “An Appeal to Heaven.”

In 1776 Massachusetts adopted a flag for the use of vessels. It was white, with the old favorite design of a pine tree in green, and the legend, “An Appeal to Heaven.”

In Independence Hall, Philadelphia, you may see an old Revolutionary flag. It is of green silk, and has a white canton having a blue field with a green pine tree surrounded by a circle of chain links. Each link is grasped by hand issuing from a cloud. This flag is thought to have been used by a company from Newburyport, Massachusetts.

There is still preserved a flag which was used at the battles of Princeton and Trenton N.J. It is of crimson watered silk and had the old English union jack—the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew—on a blue field in the upper right corner. At the left is a rattlesnake coiled to strike, and beneath it the motto, “Don't Tread on Me.” Above the snake appear the initials “J.P.I.B.W.C.P.,” standing for, “John Proctor's First Brigade, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.”

The various flags which I have mentioned are but a few of the many kinds used at the beginning of the Revolution. There is not space in this small book to describe them all. There were some which showed devices of thirteen arrows in a hand, and thirteen arrows held in the claws of an eagle.

The number thirteen represented the thirteen colonies. Before the opening of the war they had been quite independent of each other. But after the trouble with Great Britain began, they saw that they must by one another if they would protect their liberties. After a time the leading men of the colonies decided that it would be a great convenience to have a national flag. Late in 1775 Congress fitted out a fleet of armed vessels, and it was thought wise to use the same flag for the army and new navy. So, a committee, with Dr. Benjamin Franklin as its head, was appointed to go to Cambridge, Mass., for the purpose of consulting with General George Washington, who was there in command of the American army.

General Washington and the committee decided upon a design that they thought would exactly express the feelings of the colonies. The ground of this flag consisted of thirteen alternate stripes, seven red and six white. These stripes, of course, stood for the thirteen colonies. In the canton they retained the “king's colors,” the crosses of Saint George and Saint Andrew on a blue field, representing the loyalty of the colonies to the mother country despite her oppressive acts. The new “Union Flag” was first unfurled at the camp in Cambridge on January 2, 1776. It was greeted with thirteen cheers and a salute of thirteen guns.

It is not quite certain who first hoisted this flag over an American naval ship. The honor has been claimed for Captain John Paul Jones, afterward so famous as a sea-fighter. Captain Jones himself wrote, "I had the honor to hoist with my own hands the flag of freedom, the first time it was displayed on the Delaware.

He does not state just what banner he meant by the "flag of freedom," but it is supposed that he referred to the "Grand Union," though some have contended that he displayed the Rattlesnake flag. The vessel on which the "flag of freedom" was raised was the "Alfred," and perhaps it carried both flags. But whether or not Captain Jones deserves the credit claimed for him, on thing is certain, which is that, in February, 1776, there sailed out of Philadelphia a little fleet of armed vessels under command of Commodore Esek Hopkins of Rhode Island. This fleet, the beginning of the United States Navy, went to sea under the new "Union Flag," with its American stripes and British crosses.

III

It may seem strange to you that the colonies should spend out vessels under the king's colors to fight with the king's own ships. But they were obliged to do this. Your histories will tell you that, long before the Battle of Lexington was fought, armed British cruisers sailed up and down the Atlantic coast, annoying the colonial vessels in many ways. The colonies were compelled were compelled to protect their shipping from capture by the king's men-of-war. They could do this only by organizing a navy of their own. Had Great Britain ceased her oppression and given the colonies the rights and privileges they asked for, they would doubtless have gladly remained under her protection. But King George III and his ministers were not wise. They did not understand that American spirit. So they continued to try to force the colonies to give up their liberties. The result was that the colonies at last determined that they would govern themselves. On July, 4, 1776, they declared themselves free and independent States. This "Declaration of Independence" was a bold and daring act, but the Americans loved liberty above all things.

During 1776 and 1777 quite a number of striped flags came into use. In July, 1776, the "Shark," sloop of war, displayed an ensign having "a field of white and yellow with thirteen stripes." Several vessels are known to have displayed flags with red grounds and thirteen stripes in the canton. The white flag, with the pine tree and the motto, "An Appeal to Heaven," still retained its popularity. At the Battle of Long Island an American banner appeared which was of red damask inscribed with the word "Liberty." One carried at the Battle of White Plains bore the motto, "Liberty or Death."

As time went on, however, the need of a flag for the new nation became more and more evident, and on June 14, 1777, Congress passed the following act: "*Resolved*, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen strips, alternating red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

Perhaps we shall never know exactly why the stripes and stars were chosen for the design of our standard. People differ very much in opinion regarding the matter. Some people suppose that the idea of the stripes was suggested by the old Dutch flag of red, white and blue, which has before been spoken of. Others contend that they were used to represent the stripes that decorated the coats of the Continental (American) soldiers. Still others believe that the devices of both stars and stripes were

borrowed from the coat-of-arms of the Washington family. But there is nothing to show that such was the case. Washington himself said, “We take the stars from Heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty.” These words seem to explain the design of the flag very clearly.

During the Revolutionary times, Mrs. Elizabeth—called also Betsy—Ross lived in Philadelphia, in a home which is now No. 239 Arch Street. Mrs. Ross was an upholster by trade.

According to the tradition preserved by Mrs. Ross's descendants, General Washington and a committee appointed by Congress called at the Arch Street house in June, 1776, and asked Mrs. Ross to make a flag from a pencil drawing, the design of which was that of the stars and stripes. The pencil design showed stars having six points. Mrs. Ross called attention to the fact that a star, to be correct, should have but five points, and cut a five pointed star from paper. Washington and his companions then decided that the stars should be five-pointed upon the flag. Mrs. Ross made the banner, after the drawing had been still further altered, and it was the design of this flag that was adopted by Congress a year later. Afterward she was employed for several years as a flag maker for the United States government. The house on Arch street was purchased some years later by the “American Flag House and Betsy Ross Memorial Association.” On June 1, 1911, a tablet in honor of Betsy Ross was dedicated at the house by the “Flag House Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.” It was unveiled by Donaldson Beale Cooper, a great-great-grandnephew of Mrs. Ross.

It is supposed that, in the flag of 1777, the thirteen stars were arranged in the form of a circle. It was said that General Washington suggested the circle as signifying that one state was superior to another. This device appears upon a “union jack” in a portrait of Washington painted in 1779.

There is little doubt that the new flag of the United States was first displayed on land in the state of New York, at Fort Stanwix, where now stands the city of Rome. In August, 1777, the fort was besieged by a body of the enemy's forces. At the time it was without a flag, but the officers and men were equal to the occasion, and a hastily made banner soon floated from one of the bastions. The soldiers' shirts were cut up to form the white stripes and stars; bits of red cloth—or, as one story has it, pieces of a woman's red petticoat—supplied the red stripes; and the blue field of the union was made of a piece of Captain Abraham Swartwood's blue cloak. A few days later, a brave officer, Colonel Marinus Willett, made a sally from Fort Stanwix and captured five of the British ensigns. These were hoisted on the flagstaff below the impromptu American flag. We may well believe that the enemy did not enjoy the sight.

IV

Some patriotic ladies of Philadelphia made one of the new flags and presented it to John Paul Jones. Tradition says that he was so delighted with it that he procured a small boat and sailed up and down the Schuylkill River, displaying their country's standard to the crowds who gathered on the shores to gaze upon it.

John Paul Jones was the first man to induce a European power to recognize the American flag on the seas. In February, 1778, his brig, the “Ranger,” flying the stars and stripes, was saluted by the French

fleet in Quiberon Bay. In April, 1778, the “Ranger” had an engagement with the British ship “Drake.” This was the first action engaged in by a ship carrying the United States flag.

The stars and stripes waved for the first time over a foreign fortress in January, 1778, when Fort Nassau, on the island of New Providence, was captured by Captain John Rathbun and his crew of the United States sloop-of-war “Providence,” assisted by a handful of Americans who had succeeded in making their escape from British prison ships.

The ship “Bedford,” of Nantucket, was the first vessel to carry the flag into English waters after the surrender of Cornwallis. On February, 6, 1783, she appeared in the Thames River flying the United States colors, and excited great curiosity and interest.

From 1777 to 1795 the flag of thirteen stripes and thirteen stars remained the national standard. During that period, however, Vermont and Kentucky entered the union. In recognition of them Congress voted, January 13, 1794, that “from and after the first day of May, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, the flag of the United States be fifteen stripes, alternate red and white; and that the union be fifteen stars, white in a blue field.” In this new flag the union extended from the first to the fifth red stripe. The stars were arranged in three rows having five stars in each.

In 1787 the ship “Columbia” left Boston, returning in 1790 after having carried the flag of thirteen stars and stripes around the world. In 1797 the ship “Betsy” of New York carried the fifteen stars and stripes around the globe.

This flag remained in use for a period of twenty-three years. It was the “Star Spangled Banner” of which Francis Scott Key wrote in 1814. Francis Scott Key was a lawyer of Baltimore. In September, 1814, he left that city under a flag of truce for the purpose of obtaining the release of a friend who had been taken prisoner by the British and confined upon a ship of the fleet then occupying Chesapeake Bay. The enemy was preparing to bombard Fort McHenry, and Key was detained by them. From this vessel he witnessed the bombardment which, fortunately, was unsuccessful. The song truthfully describes what the writer actually beheld with his own eyes. A portion of it was written on board the ship. It was completed on shore, after he and his friend were released. The very flag that floated over Fort McHenry, and for whose appearance Key so eagerly watched “by the dawn's early light,” is still preserved in the National Museum at Washington. The stars in its union are arranged in three lines of five stars each. The old banner is full of rents made by the shots of the foe.

The flag of fifteen stripes and stars had a most honorable career. It waved aloft from “Old Ironsides” (the ship Constitution), when it was launched at Boston in October, 1797. It floated over Lake Erie in 1813, when the gallant Perry “met the enemy” and conquered them; and beneath its folds Jackson's men fought behind the cotton bales at New Orleans the last great battle of the War of 1812.

In 1817 it was proposed that a new national standard should be adopted. For this a design was made showing twenty white stars in a blue field in the upper left hand quarter, and the figure of Liberty in the lower left quarter. The upper right hand quarter was occupied by a spread eagle holding a shield, the lower by thirteen alternate stripes of red and white. It was not a beautiful design and was not adopted.

On April 4, 1818, Congress passed an “Act to Establish the Flag of the United States.” This act declared that, from and after the fourth day of July next ensuing, the flag should have “thirteen

horizontal stripes, alternating red and white;” and that the union should display “twenty stars, white in a blue field.” It also provided that, on the admission of every new state to the Union, a star should be added to the union of the flag; and this has been the regulation ever since. The new standard was first hoisted above the House of Representatives, April 13, 1818. It showed the twenty stars arranged to form one large star, according to a design suggested by Captain Samuel C. Reid of the United States Navy.

The device of one large star did not meet the universal favor, and, as Congress had made no rule regulating the arrangement of the stars, people generally consulted their own tastes in the matter. Most flags retained the old pattern of horizontal lines. Others had the stars scattered over the blue irregularly, or in the form of anchors, circles, or diamonds. Sometimes the stars were made to represent the letters U.S. These various designs were very puzzling to foreign nations, and the question was often asked, “What is the United States flag?” As years went on, the horizontal line arrangement came more and more to be regarded as the best.

In your school histories you have read about the Civil War, when the Southern States revolted from the Union and called themselves the “Confederate States of America.” These Confederate States had four different banners in use while their struggle for independence lasted.

The first of these was generally known as the “Stars and Bars.” It was adopted by the Confederate Congress in session at Montgomery, Alabama, March 4, 1861, the day upon which Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States. The ground consisted of two red stripes and one white one of equal width, the white occupying the center. A blue union, extending the width of two stripes, contained a circle of seven white stars, the number of the Confederate States. This flag was found to bear too great a resemblance to the United States ensign to be of good service. On the battlefield it was the cause of much confusion and many mistakes. It was soon superseded by the “Battle Flag” was designed by General Pierre G.T. Beauregard. The ground was red and traversed throughout its length by a blue diagonal cross, displaying one central white star with three more stars in each of the four arms, the states having increased to thirteen. This banner was often called the “Southern Cross.”

On May 1, 1863, the Confederate Congress adopted a new national ensign. This had a pure white ground with the “Battle Flag” in the canton. But this flag also proved unsatisfactory, as it was liable to be mistaken for a flag of truce. So, on March 4, 1865, the Congress changed its design by adding a red stripe to the white ground. But the flag had a short career as, soon after its adoption, Lee's surrender put an end to the war. Now the Stars and Stripes floats all over this great land, and Southern hearts are as loyal to it as are Northern.

V

You frequently hear the flag spoken of as “Old Glory.” The name is a very appropriate one. There is an original “Old Glory,” and its history is very interesting. It is claimed that this flag is in possession of Mrs. Mary J. Driver Roland in Wells, Nevada. It belonged to Captain William Driver, who was born in Salem in 1803, and removed to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1837. In 1831, Captain Driver was presented with the flag christened it “Old Glory.” After using it upon his brig, the “Charles Doggett,” he carried it to his Southern home. At the breaking out of the Civil War the Confederates tried to seize the flag, and searched Captain Driver's house pretty thoroughly. But the shrewd Yankee had carefully sewed it into the cover of his bed and it was not discovered. On February 25, 1862, the Federal troops entered

Nashville and “Old Glory” was unfurled from the flagstaff of the state capitol. In 1882 this historic flag passed into the possession of Mrs. Roland, who is a niece of Captain Driver.

Some of the finest poems ever written have had for their subject the United States flag. One of the most famous of these, “The Star-Spangled Banner,” has already been referred to. Another famous one, “The American Flag,” was composed by Joseph Rodman Drake and published in 1819, the last four lines having been supplied by Fitz-Green Halleck, an intimate friend of the poet. “The Flag of Our Union” was written about ten years previous to the Civil War. The author was George P. Morris, a journalist and poet, who died in New York City in 1864. “Columbia, the Blue,” was the composition of an English actor, Thomas Becket, of Philadelphia, and was first published in 1843. Of later day poems, one of the most popular is “The Flag Goes By,” by Henry Holcomb Bennett.

Besides the national standards there are other official flags used by the United States Government. There are flags for the President, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of War. The Revenue Service and Light House Service have special flags. Naval vessels have distinguishing flags showing the rank of their commanders, and the Army has different colored pennants for artillery, calvary, infantry and engineers. Both Army and Navy use flags for signalling.

The officers and men of the Army and Navy are required to display the greatest respect to the flag. On a United States ship of war the flag is hoisted at eight o'clock and flies until sunset. At military posts and forts the flag is hoisted at *reveille* and remains until sunset. In an army camp you will find what is called a “color line.” This consists of a line of stacked rifles at the front of the camp, on which the flags, or colors, are laid in the morning. Whoever crosses the “color line” during the day salutes the flags by touching his cap. At evening parade the “color guard” escorts the colors to the place in line. They are saluted by the regiment, and the band plays the “Star-Spangled Banner,” making the ceremony very impressive.

There are certain flags which have special meanings that are everywhere understood. A black flag has ever been the chosen ensign of pirates, and it was often decorated with the emblem of a skull and crossbones. A white flag indicates peace, and is used as a flag of truce when it is desirable that hostilities should be suspended. A yellow flag is used upon hospitals, and is also the signal of quarantine. A white flag displaying a red cross is the standard adopted by the Red Cross Society, whose work is to give relief to the wounded and dying. A flag at half mast is always a sign of mourning. When a vessel is in distress the flag is raised with the union down. Surrender is sometimes signified by hoisting the flag of the victor above that of the vanquished, and sometimes by simply raising a white flag.

“False Colors” is a term applied to colors which do not belong to the vessel using them. In war, false colors are employed to deceive an enemy and to prevent capture, or to lure the enemy within gunshot. It is, however, considered dishonorable to use distress signals for the purpose of enticing a foe to destruction.

The “union” on the American and British flags occupies the “canton,” or upper inner corner. This portion of the flag is flown from a “jackstaff” in the bow of naval vessels, and is called the “Union Jack.”

The American flag is one of the oldest standards in existence. It is older than the flags now in use in

Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the South American States. It is older even than the modern flags of China and Japan. It has never been conquered. In wars with Great Britain, France, Tripoli, Mexico, the Confederate States, and Spain, it has always been victorious. In the United States it has supplanted the English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Swedish flags. It has been planted in Alaska, Hawaii, the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, Tutuila, Panama, and even at the North Pole.

With every year the story of our glorious banner is more reverently studied. The people of every nation are learning it. To them the American Flag is the symbol of hope and happiness. Why? Because the flag stands for liberty and equality. It is not, like so many others, the emblem of tyranny and oppression. It is the “flag of the free” in every sense of the word. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the poet, has beautifully called it the “Flower of Liberty.”

The boys and girls of America should cherish the flag as their dearest possession. The Flag Salute should not be to them merely a collection of meaningless words. I am sure it will not be if they once understand what the flag tells by means of its stripes and stars, its red, and white, and blue.

A great orator—Charles Sumner of Massachusetts—once said in speaking of the flag; “The very colors have language... White is for unity, red for valor, blue for justice.” Surely, purity, bravery, and the love of right are qualities which every American child should earnestly try to cultivate.

“Flag of the sun that shines for all,
Flag of the breeze that blows for all,
Flag of the sea that flows for all,
Flag of the school that stands for all,
Flag of the people, one and all,
Hail, flag of liberty, all hail!
Hail, glorious years to come!”

-Hezekiah Butterworth

Note:
The Audiobook continues from this point with:
Flag Regulations &
Poems about the Flag