



NEWSLETTER

#1 2005

Colors & Standards Of The Emerging United States Of America

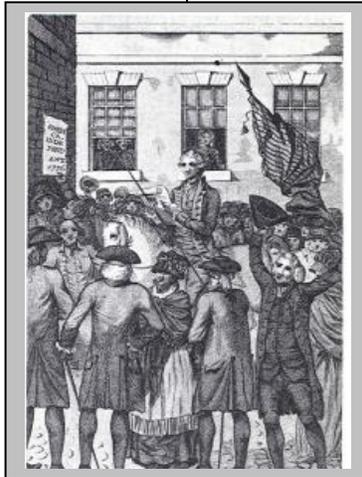
The word *colors* and *standards* are, in a way, synonyms for the word *flags*. But the word *colors* specifically refers to flags used in the military, as compared to flags used by private citizens. And the word *standards* specifically refers to colors used by, or representing, military regimental units. Since this article will be discussing the flags created and used by the Patriots of the American Revolutionary War, it is appropriate that they be called *colors* and *standards*.

The use of the word *colors* to refer to a flag derives from the practice of heraldry in the Medieval Age. In heraldry, it referred to the 'colors' incorporated in the field, or background, of the banner. Each element of an heraldic design (formally titled an *achievement* and informally known as a *coat of arms*) signified something, and the color of those elements either augmented or emphasized the signification. During the Medieval Age, armies were paid by, and therefore their members were loyal to, particular individuals. Those individuals, whether they were kings, dukes, knights or whatever, would have the right to bear heraldic

achievements by which they could be distinctly identified. Banners and flags, colors and standards were created as signs to identify the armies which carried them into battle. And so, the heraldic designs which decorated them were those possessed by the leaders of the armies. In other words, initially there were no 'national' flags or

colors per se. Colors and standards carried on the battlefield by the soldiers were not theirs by right of citizenship, but rather their leader's and the soldiers simply carried them because they were being paid to. The heraldic designs which came to be regarded as 'national' designs, such as the British 'Royal Standard Of The United Kingdom', derived from the British monarchy's own heraldic achievements.

As the Americans of the 1770s began to form ideas of gaining their independence from the mother country of Great Britain, and their sense of loyalty to her began to diminish; the need for *colors* that reflected their burgeoning new identity became evident. It should be remembered that, at least initially, quite a number of the delegates to the Continental Congress advocated maintaining a



cordial relationship with Great Britain. The Olive Branch Petition was evidence of this desire by many to not sever the apron strings immediately. It was only after King George III's refusal to take into consideration any of the colonists' concerns that an absolute severance of the ties to England was even considered by the Patriots. It can therefore be understood why the first *colors* to be created by the Patriots included the Union Jack in their designs. The distinctive pattern of the Union Jack tended to be inserted in the canton (*i.e.* the upper left quarter), on a field of red. And in some cases, the word 'Liberty' in white letters was added to the field of red.

The Patriots' *colors* started out with the stripes. A date when the stripes were first chosen to form the field of the design of the Patriots' *colors* cannot be pinpointed with accuracy. David Hackett Fischer, in his book, *Liberty And Freedom*, states that the "Union Flag" of the Sons of Liberty, was seen in Boston as early as 1773. In the caption of an illustration of a Liberty Flag, the date of 1765-66 suggests an earlier beginning. Edward W. Richardson, in his book, *Standards And Colors Of The American Revolution*, stated that the vertical stripes of the Sons of Liberty flag probably were inspired by Paul Revere's engraving (of Ben Franklin's sketch) of the snake cut into nine parts representing the, then, un-united colonies. That engraving was not published until 1774. Whether the Sons of Liberty flag was based on the Revere engraving, and whether it was in use as early as 1765, when the Sons of Liberty were organized cannot be confirmed.

The earliest documented reference to any *colors* created by the Patriots appeared in the *Boston Evening Post* for Monday, 24 October, 1774. In that issue it was reported that:

"We have juft received the following intelligence from Taunton – that on Friday laft a liberty pole 112 feet long was raifed there on which a vane, and a Union flag flying with the words Liberty and Union thereon."

The vertical stripes of alternating red and white were, at some point, rotated so that they

would lie horizontally. Commonly referred to as the "Rebel Stripes", these colors were flown on naval vessels well into the 1790s. The addition of the Union Jack to the canton resulted in what was known as the *Continental Colors* or the *Grand Union Flag*.

The Grand Union Flag was raised on Prospect Hill in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the first day of January, 1776. But the British assumed that the addition of the Union Jack to the Rebel Stripes was a signal for surrender. General Washington wrote to Joseph Reed on the 4th of January that:

"We had hoifted the union flag in compliment to the United Colonies. But, behold, it was received in Bofton as a token of the deep impreffion the fpeech had made upon us, and as a fignal of fubmiffion."

Another problem for the new Grand Union Flag was that it was not actually new and unique. The *colors* of the British East India Company also consisted of the Union Jack in the canton, on a field of nine horizontal red and white stripes. Needless to say, the Patriots soon dispensed with the Union Jack, and began to think about a different design.

In the spring of 1777 an Indian, by the name of Thomas Green, had written to Thomas Wharton, the president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. According to the entry entered into the Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council for Tuesday, 3rd June 1777:

"His Excell'y the Prefident laid before the Council three Strings of Wampum, which had been delivered to him fome time before by Thomas Green, a Nominal Indian of the ----- Nation, requefting that a Flag of the United States might be delivered to him, to take to the Chiefs of his Nation, to be ufed by them for their fecurity & protection, when they may have occafion to vifit us..."

Green's request was forwarded to the Continental Congress on 03 June, 1777. Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey, and head of the Marine

Committee, was given the task to respond to the request. Hopkinson therefore laid claim to having created the design of the *national colors* as we know it.

During the 14 June, 1777 session of the Continental Congress, it was resolved that:

“The flag of the (thirteen) United States be thirteen ftripes, alternat red and white: that the union be thirteen fstars, white in a blue field, repreftenting a new conftellation.”

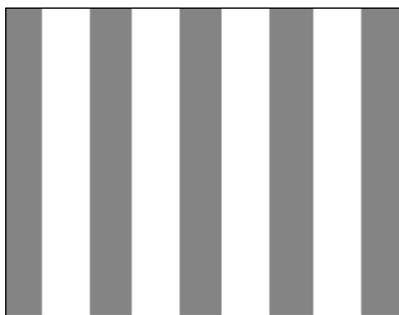
The delegates to the Continental Congress did not specify how the thirteen stars should be arranged on the blue field. As a result, different designs proliferated.

It should be noted that the *tradition* of Betsy Ross stitching together the first Stars and Stripes flag, at the request of George Washington, George Ross and Robert Morris did not come into existence until the year 1870. The *tradition* was started by Betsy’s grandson, William Canby. Although Betsy Ross was in fact a seamstress, and is known to have produced flags for the Patriot Cause, there is no evidence that she made the *first* national colors. Nor is there any factual evidence that Betsy Ross originated the design in which the thirteen stars are positioned in a circle on the blue field. The name *Betsy Ross Flag*, in regard to a flag with the stars in a circle on the blue field on the canton, was not popularized until the time of the nation’s Centennial.

Of lesser notoriety was the Philadelphia milliner by the name of Margaret Manny. It was she who, in the fall of 1775, stitched together a red and white striped Sons of Liberty flag with the combined crosses of St. Andrew and St. George in the canton. James Wharton supplied Miss Manny with forty-nine yards of broad bunting and fifty-two and one-half yards of narrower bunting for an ensign destined to be flown on the flagship of the American squadron, the *Alfred*. On 03 December, 1775, Captain John Paul Jones hoisted the new *colors* produced by Miss Manny on the *Alfred*.

The *Grand Union* colors stitched by Margaret Manny was also flying from the mast of the *Andrew Doria* on 16 November, 1776 as it sailed into the port of the West Indies island of St. Eustatius. The *Andrew Doria* was headed for Fort Orange on the Dutch island of St. Eustatius to obtain military supplies and also to deliver a copy of the Declaration of Independence to its governor, Johannes de Graaf. Isaiah Robinson, captain of the *Andrew Doria* fired a salute from the guns of the brig-of-war. If Captain Robinson would have struck his colors, and the salute had come from an unmarked ship, no importance would have been attached to what happened next. But the salute came from a warship flying the flag of the newly declared independent United States of America. Governor de Graaf gave orders for the guns of Fort Orange to fire a salute in reply, and in that moment the first formal recognition of the United States of America by a foreign nation took place.

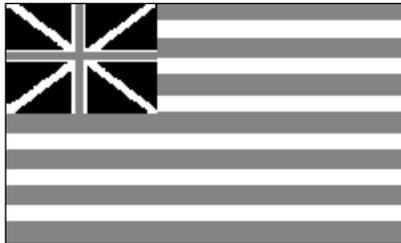
A Gallery Of Patriot *Colors*



**“Sons of Liberty” Flag, claimed to be used in 1773,
and possibly as early as 1765**

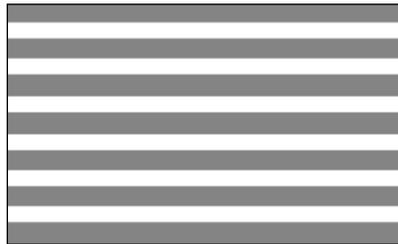


During 1774 and 1775 flags appeared bearing the Union Jack and, in some cases, mottoes such as “Liberty”. In one case, that of the town of Taunton, Massachusetts, the motto, “Liberty and Union” was affixed to the red ensign.



Flag combining the Union Jack and the Sons of Liberty stripes flown on the ship *Alfred* in 1775, and the *Andrew Doria* in 1776, later called the “Grand Union” flag

The “Rebel Stripes”,

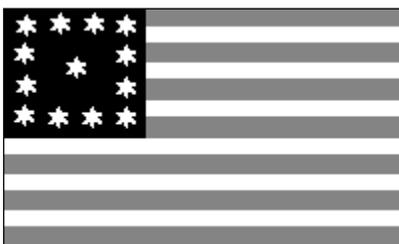
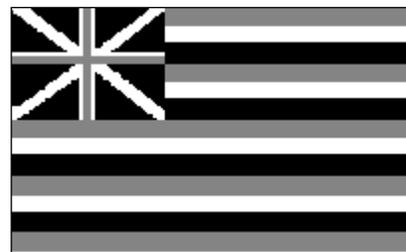


a flag flown on ships into the 1790s.



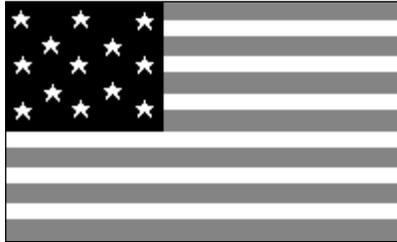
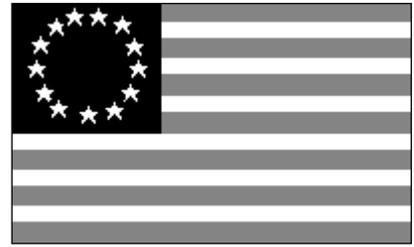
“Red, White & Blue Stripes” flag flown at Fort Mifflin in 1777.

“Union” flag flown on the *Lexington* in 1777.

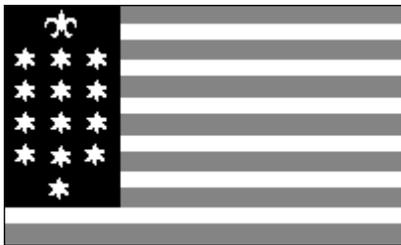


“Stars & Stripes” as painted by John Trumball, an officer of the Continental Army 1775–1777.

“Stars & Stripes” as depicted by Charles Wilson Peale in the 1780s. Peale, like Trumbull, served as an officer in the Continental Army and drew his inspiration from the regimental colours he personally saw during his service.

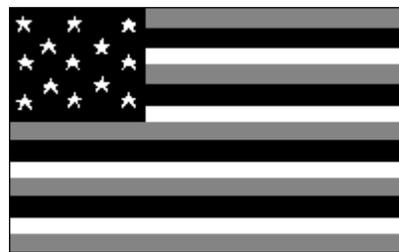


In 1783 Abel Buell published *A New And Correct Map Of The United States Of North America*, in which this image was reproduced.



The “Stars & Stripes”, with its thirteen stars and thirteen alternating red and white stripes, was given the addition of a fleur-de-lis to represent the alliance between the United States and France.

In 1784 Matthias Sprengel published this image in his *Berlin Almanac*.



Blair County Chapter Calendar ~ 2005

All meetings to be held at Kings Restaurant, 3000 6th Ave., Altoona

May 14	2nd Quarterly Meeting
Aug 13	3rd Quarterly Meeting
Nov 12	4th Quarterly Meeting

Tribute To Edgar R. Hartt

I have not previously included short biographical sketches of compatriot members of the Blair County Chapter who have passed away. This is not necessarily the beginning of such, because it is so easy to miss someone; and so to avoid offending any members by including some and not including others, I have simply avoided including anyone. And I plan to continue that policy. But in the case of Ed Hartt, I am going to make an exception, because it was through the urging of Ed that this newsletter came into being.

Edgar R. Hartt, Esq., became a compatriot member of the Sons of the American Revolution on 28 February, 1983. The Patriot ancestor from whom Ed traced his lineal descent was Nehemiah Heartt, Sr.

During the years that he was a member of the SAR, Ed served in a number of capacities. During 1986-87, he served as the President of the Blair County Chapter. He later served, at one time or another, as the Chapter's Chancellor, as its Secretary, and as its Registrar.

Edgar R. Hartt died on 31 March, 2005.

A Long - Overdue Welcome To The Susquehanna Chapter Members

In 1938, a chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution was organized at the borough of Clearfield, in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania. The new chapter was named the Susquehanna Chapter in honor of the Susquehanna River that runs through the borough of Clearfield. John S. Fisher, then president of the Pennsylvania Society, installed Glenn E. Thomson as the Chapter's first president on 15 October, 1938.

Over the years interest waned and membership dropped; and the Susquehanna Chapter was in danger of losing all its members and being disbanded. Inactive chapters are inevitably disbanded by the Pennsylvania Society. The idea of asking the remaining members if they would like to join the Blair County Chapter was brought up at a meeting of the Blair County Chapter in 2002. The suggestion was submitted to the Susquehanna Chapter members, and certain of the Susquehanna Chapter members decided to take the Blair County Chapter up on its offer. The report of the District Deputy #5 (Edgar Hartt) at the November 2, 2002 meeting of the Pennsylvania Society stated that the Susquehanna Chapter "Remains inactive with no elected officers or meetings." He also noted that "One member has transferred his membership to the Blair County Chapter." By the Spring meeting of the Pennsylvania Society, Mr. Hartt was able to announce that "Most of the [Susquehanna Chapter] members have transferred to the Blair County Chapter. I think there is only one member left on the Susquehanna roster."

There is no doubt that the members of the Susquehanna Chapter did not enjoy having their chapter disbanded, but we hope they have already felt, or will come to feel, welcome by the Blair County Chapter. Due to various reasons, this welcome was not extended in a previous newsletter, so I hope that this 'long - overdue' welcome will be acceptable.