

# Holy-Days and Holidays

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A TREASURY OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL, SERMONS IN  
FULL AND IN BRIEF, SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS,  
AND POETRY, RELATING TO

## HOLY DAYS AND HOLIDAYS

*Compiled by*

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same as the naval flag. Hereafter there will be no difference in the arrangement of stars between the army and navy, as an agreement has been arrived at between the War and Navy Departments.

American bunting only is now used in the manufacture of the Stars and Stripes, and these flags are woven for the government on American looms.

While the sizes of the government flags are not prescribed by statute law, they are fixed by regulations of the Departments of the War and Navy, which have been based upon convenience, utility and beauty, and the exigencies of the service.

The storm and recruiting flags measure each eight feet in length by four feet two

inches in width. The post flag measures twenty feet in length by ten feet in width.

The garrison flag, hoisted only on great occasions and national holidays, measures thirty-six feet in length by twenty feet in width. The union is always one-third of the length of the flag, and extends to the lower edge of the fourth red stripe from the top.

The national colors carried by regiments of infantry and artillery and the battalion of engineers, on parade or in battle, are made of silk. They are six feet six inches long and six feet wide, and are mounted on staffs. The field of the colors is thirty-one inches in length, and extends to the lower edge of the fourth red stripe from the top.—Y. C.

## BETSY ROSS AND THE FLAG

BY HARRY PRINGLE FORD

On the 14th day of June, 1777, the Continental Congress passed the following resolution:

"Resolved, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

This resolution, the first recorded legislative action, so far as known, relating to the adoption of a national flag in this country, was taken on the recommendation of Robert Morris, the famous financier and treasurer of the Revolution, and George Ross, a Pennsylvania signer of the Declaration of Independence, who, at some time during the previous year, had been appointed a committee to consider the subject of adopting a general standard for all the colonies—various banners and devices having been in use, not only by the colonies, but also by the different regiments, up to this time.

The committee, accompanied by General Washington, called at the house of Betsy Ross, 239 Arch Street, on a day between the 23d of May and the 4th of June, 1776, and left with her an order to make a flag from designs which they submitted. This she did so successfully as to lead to the adoption of the above resolution the following year.

Mrs. Ross, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Griscom, was born January 1st, 1752, of Quaker parentage. She was noted for her exquisite skill in needlework; and that she was engaged in the flag-making business previous to the adoption of the national standard in June, 1777, is evident from the fact that in the preceding May, Congress made an order on the Treasury "to pay Betsy Ross £14. 12s. 2d. for flags for the fleet in the Delaware River." In the latter part of 1773 she married John Ross, the son of the Rev. Æneas Ross, an Episcopal clergyman, of Newcastle, Delaware, a brother to the Hon. George Ross mentioned above.

The young married couple carried on the

upholstery business at 239 Arch Street, Philadelphia. Their happiness, however, was destined to be short lived. The spirit of liberty was awakening, and hundreds of patriots were sacrificing the pleasures of home on the altar of their country. Among the foremost of these was young John Ross. One night, whilst guarding, with several other young men, some military stores on one of the city wharves along the Delaware River, he received so serious an injury that he died from the effects of it, after long and anxious nursing on the part of his faithful and devoted young wife. He was buried in the Christ Church burying ground, Fifth and Arch Streets, January 20, 1776. The Ross pew, marked with a national flag, is still preserved in the historic old church.

Left a widow at the early age of twenty-four, Mrs. Ross heroically determined to maintain her independence, if possible, by continuing the upholstering business; and it was not long after the death of her husband that she was called on by the Committee of Congress in reference to making a sample flag for the Nation.

Mr. George Canby, a grandson of Mrs. Ross, who is still living in Philadelphia, and who well remembers his grandmother, gives the following interesting incident of this historic visit:

"The committee asked her if she thought she could make a flag from a design, a rough drawing of which General Washington exhibited. She replied with diffidence and becoming modesty that 'she did not know, but would try.' She noticed, however, that the stars, as drawn, had six points, and informed the committee that the correct star should have but five points. They answered that they understood this, but that a great number of stars would be required, and the more regular form with six points could be more easily made than one with five. She responded in a practical way, by deftly folding a scrap of paper, and then, with a single

clip of her scissors, she displayed a true, symmetrical, five-pointed star.

"This at once decided that point in her favor. After the design was partially re-drawn on the table in her little back parlor, she was left to make her sample flag according to her own ideas of the arrangement of the stars, the proportions of the stripes and the general form of the whole. Some time after its completion, it was presented to Congress, and the committee soon thereafter had the pleasure of reporting to her that her flag was accepted as the national standard, and she was authorized to proceed at once to the manufacture of a large number for disposal by the Continental Congress."

Mr. Canby has in his possession the old family Bible of his grandmother. It contains many interesting entries. No authentic likeness of Mrs. Ross exists. She was married three times. Her second husband was Captain Joseph Ashburn, to whom she was married in the Old Swedes Church, Philadelphia, June 15th, 1777. He died a prisoner of

war, March 3d, 1782, in the old Mill Prison, Plymouth, England. His friend, John Claypoole, who was a prisoner with him, was finally released, and became the third husband of our fair heroine, May 8th, 1783. Mr. Claypoole died August 3d, 1817. His wife died January 30th, 1836, at the advanced age of eighty-four years, having lived to see our government firmly established and our Nation taking its rightful place among the foremost powers of the world.

The quaint little brick birthplace of the flag at 239 Arch Street, is still standing, altho more than a century and a half old. The front ground floor is now used as a cigar store; the room just back of it, about twelve by eighteen feet in size, is the one in which the flag is said to have been made. It remains quite as it was in the old days, and gives every evidence of belonging to a time not our own. We trust that the old house may long be preserved to keep alive in patriotic hearts the memories that are inseparably associated with the origin of our beautiful banner, the glorious Stars and Stripes.—F.

## ABOUT FLAGS

BY ELIZA E. CLARKE

Our flag has been called by various names, in song and story, as "Star-Spangled Banner," "Flag of the Free," "Banner of Liberty," "The Starry Flag," "Stripes and Stars," "Old Glory," etc. But by whatever name it may be called, the true American feels an enthusiastic sentiment of patriotism stirring in his heart, whenever its stripes and stars are unfolded to his sight.

Previous to the adoption of the stripes and stars as our national emblem, while each colony had its own flag, several attempts were made to arrange one which might serve the purpose of all. One of these consisted of thirteen alternate stripes of red and white, with a rattlesnake uncoiled diagonally upon it, the warning "Don't tread on me," being suggestive of the ruling sentiment of the times.

There are various flags in common use of interest to all. Among them, the flag of truce bears an important part. It is a white flag, which is displayed to an enemy to show a desire for consultation, and which protects the bearer from injury from the enemy's fire when approaching their lines. After a battle, when both armies wish to send parties to the field to bury their dead and carry off the wounded, they go with safety under the flag of truce, as it is never fired upon in honorable warfare.

A black flag is a piratical emblem, and means "no quarter;" or, in other words,

death to all who are captured by the ship over which it floats. We can well imagine the dismay it must have carried to the hearts of those whose misfortune it was to see its dismal folds displayed at the masthead of an approaching vessel.

A yellow flag floating over a building, or from the mast of a ship shows that some contagious disease is prevailing there.

The expression, "dipping a flag," means lowering it slightly and raising it again as a salute to a vessel or fort.

If the President of the United States makes a sea voyage the flag is carried at the bow of his barge, or at the masthead of the ship he is on, which is then called a flagship. The same is true of the ship commanded by a commodore of the United States Navy.

"The flag of Fort McHenry," whose "broad stripes and bright stars" inspired Francis Key to write our national song, "The Star-Spangled Banner," still exists in a tolerable state of preservation, and is in the possession of Mr. Eben Appleton, of Yonkers, N. Y., a grandson of Col. Armistead, the gallant defender of Fort McHenry. The stripes are two feet wide, and the stars are two feet from point to point. The flag is thirty feet wide and was originally forty feet long, without doubt; but in its present curtailed dimensions is only thirty-two feet long.—E. G.