

THE
Jewish Veteran

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JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES

Feature Articles

The Making Of Old Glory

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Memorial Day Services

Message of PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

JUNE



1937



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THE MAKING OF OLD GLORY

A History of the American Flag

By MARTIN SELSTAL

How the Stars and Stripes became the national emblem of the United States is told in this brief history of the American Flag on the occasion of Flag Day.

THE EDITOR.

In the minds and hearts of every American the Stars and Stripes stand as a visible symbol of the ideals of the American people. The American Flag is the one focus in which all unite in reverential devotion regardless of differences in political, economic or social views. It is surprising, therefore, how little most of us know about the origin of the national emblem. Every schoolboy is familiar with the beautiful tradition that Betsy Ross designed the first American Flag as we know it today but other than that few Americans are familiar with the history of Old Glory.

Forty-eight flags have entered into the history and evolution of the American Flag. The first emblem to fly over what is now the United States was the raven flag of the Vikings, who explored the coast of New England in 1,000 A. D. This was followed by the Spanish flag of Columbus and the discoverer's personal banner. In the early 17th century parts of America were ruled under the John Cabot flag, the British and Scottish emblems, the fleur-de-lis, Bourbon ensign and tri-color of France and the insignia of Henry Hudson and the Dutch West India Company.

One of the first Colonial flags was the three county troop flag displayed by the Three County Troop of Massachusetts during King Philip's War in 1659. Most of the 13 colonies had their own emblems and it was not until the beginning of the Revolutionary War that something approaching a national emblem appeared. This was the Bedford flag, carried by the Minute Men of Bedford who rushed to Lexington on April 19, 1775, to meet the British regulars. This flag, showing the hand of an armored knight carrying a sword, and a yellow ribbon with the words "conquer or die" on a red field, was the first flag of the American Revolution to receive a baptism of fire.

Many other flags were in use during the Revolutionary War. Before independence was proclaimed the most common emblem was the Taunton flag which had the British ensign in the corner and the word liberty in white on a red field. When feeling against England grew bitter this was replaced by other banners, such as the St. George Cross red ensign, the Newbury flag, the linked hand flag and the Bunker Hill flag. These four still showed the British influence in Colonial banners. It was the Continental flag, carried by the American troops at Bunker Hill, which first completely eliminated British emblems from an American flag. This flag was a red field and the pine tree on a white canton. It was followed by the Pine Tree flag, the Liberty Tree flag, the Gadsden flag, the Culpeper flag, the Pine Tree-Rattlesnake flag, the Connecticut flag, the Moultrie flag, the Moultrie Liberty flag, and the Rhode Island flag, all of which were carried by regiments from the various states.

When the struggle against England took

on the nature of a fight for independence, efforts were made to provide a national flag representative of all the colonies. The Grand Union flag with its field of thirteen alternate red and white stripes, symbolizing the union of the thirteen colonies, and the King's colors in the canton, was the first national emblem. It was raised at Cambridge by George Washington on January 2, 1776 and remained the flag of the Revolution until the adoption of the Stars and Stripes by an act of the Continental Congress. The fact that this banner was only half American was indicative of political conditions at the time because the colonies still gave a formal allegiance to Great Britain.

It was not until nearly a year after the signing of the Declaration of Independence that the Continental Congress adopted the present form of the flag as the national emblem. On June 14, 1777 the Continental Congress adopted the following resolution: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternately red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white, on a blue field, representing a new constellation." Thus was created the American Flag.

The stripes came from the Grand Union flag. The stars may have come either from Washington's coat of arms or from the Rhode Island flag, which displayed thirteen white stars on a field of blue. Where the Stars and Stripes was first used is a matter of dispute. At least half a dozen localities lay claim to the honor. Most historians are inclined to award the honor to Fort Stanwix, New York. There, on August 3, 1777, the Stars and Stripes was first displayed in the face of an armed enemy. The flag was improvised; the white stripes and stars coming from a soldier's shirt, captain's furnishing the blue of the union, and the red stripes being provided by the flannel petticoats of the women of the garrison. There is also some evidence that the flag was unfurled to the breeze at Fort Ann, N. Y., on July 8, 1777 and at Saratoga on September 19, 1777.

Since the resolution of the Continental Congress did not specify the arrangement of the thirteen stars they appeared in many forms. The Fort Stanwix flag presented the stars in a circle. The first Stars and Stripes displayed on a naval vessel (by Paul Jones on the Ranger on November 1, 1777), laid the stars out in staggered forma-

tion in alternate lines of rows of threes and twos. A flag flown at Fort Bennington, Vermont, on August 16, 1777 had 11 of the stars in the form of a horseshoe and the other two in the upper corner of the blue field. The Bon Homme Richard flag, which Paul Jones flew on the Bon Homme Richard during the battle with the Serapis on the night of September 23, 1779 had only 12 stars, in four parallel rows of three each, because he didn't know whether Georgia had joined the confederation.

The flag with thirteen stripes and thirteen stars continued to be used as the national emblem until Congress passed the following act: "That from and after May 1, 1795, 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." This change was necessitated by the admission of Vermont and Kentucky to the Union. The flag authorized in 1795 had the stars arranged in three rows of five each instead of in a circle, and served for 23 years.

With the admission of more new states, it became apparent that the 1795 flag would have to be further modified. In 1818 Congress passed a law providing "that from and after the fourth day of July next, the flag of the United States be thirteen horizontal stripes, alternate red and white; that the union have twenty stars, white in a blue field; that on the admission of every new state into the Union, one star be added to the union on the flag; and that such addition shall take effect on the fourth of July next succeeding such admission." Since then the only change in the American Flag has been the addition of new stars. No law has ever been passed to designate how the stars shall be arranged. At one time they formed a design of a larger star, but by common practice the accepted design has come to be six rows of eight stars each.

Although Congress passed no other legislation with regard to the flag after 1818 two whole generations were to pass before the Stars and Stripes flew over every corner of what is now the continental United States. Until the purchase of Florida in 1819 that state flew the flag of Spain. Texas flew two of its own flags the Mexican banner until it joined the Union, while California displayed the California flag during the short-lived days of the California republic. The last flags other than Old Glory to fly over any part of the United States were the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy and three other emblems displayed by the Confederates from 1861 to 1865.

Have you written your Congressman to recommend to Secretary of Navy Swanson that a U. S. Destroyer be named after Uriah P. Levy?

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Make It Mean Something

Self-criticism being the best and safest criticism, it is time that we called attention to a serious oversight on the part of the comrades entrusted with planning the program for our past national encampments. In the name of our organization we emphasize the descriptive term, "Jewish." In the day by day post activities, work of a specific Jewish nature predominates. In the year-round activities of national headquarters we also concentrate on matters of concern to the Jewish people. Our reputation and accomplishments have been based mainly on Jewish activities. But an outsider who has attended some of our recent national encampments couldn't help wondering why the word Jewish is in our name. He would have been aroused to this speculation by the fact that very little about our encampment program justified the use of the term "Jewish" in our name.

It is a matter of sad experience to all who have attended our recent encampments that the bulk of the time is taken up with caucusing, electioneering and voting. Entertainment, a few speeches and a couple of reports round out the average encampment program. This, we submit, is a mistake.

We should see to it that the 1937 encampment sets a new standard. We should invite a few prominent Jewish leaders to address us on vital questions of concern to all Jews. We should set aside one session, or part of a session, for a round table discussion of Jewish problems of particular interest to Jewish war veterans, with qualified experts as leaders. We should see to it that the report of the resolutions committee is rendered at a time when it can be given the mature and thoughtful consideration it merits but seldom receives. In short, we believe it essential that our encampment program be so devised as to justify our name. It is not intended hereby to in any wise minimize the purely veteran program of our conventions.

The Asbury Park encampment is still six

months in the future but it is not too soon to begin to think about it and to give thought to the problems we want to take up there. It is that which motivates this editorial and others on kindred subjects to follow in succeeding issues. We hope that these frank and constructive thoughts will be suggestive to the encampment committee and will stimulate the comrades throughout the country to begin thinking and talking about the encampment.

Flag Day

Among the great nations of the world the United States is a comparative youngster, for we can look back upon a national existence of but 161 years ago. But the American flag is older than the flags of almost every other nation. Only two national standards are older than the Stars and Stripes, which was born a year after the Declaration of Independence.

Over the years the flag has come to represent our national unity. It has become the symbol of liberty, equality and justice. There is something about the national colors that stirs even the most cynical. Those who scoff at the display of and respect for the flag are insulting not only the expression of American nationhood but are doing violence to one of the most treasured of our national ideas.

The American flag is what it is not because of its color or material but because of what it represents. There are some countries whose emblems stand for tyranny, oppression and persecution. But Old Glory symbolizes freedom, love for fellow man, a people's striving for humanity. It is tangible evidence that come what may the American people are bound together in the spirit of brotherhood. Under its folds we are all Americans regardless of our ancestry, creed or station in life. The flag covers us all. That is the message of the American flag.

What the flag means to those who found a haven refuge in the country over which it flies is best indicated by the fact that it was a naturalized citizen, a Jew, who first got the inspiration to set aside one day in the year on which to pay homage to the national emblem. Flag Day, which is celebrated on June 14th, owes its inception to Ben Altheimer. This German-born Jew was so deeply moved by the flag of his adopted country that he devoted himself to making its birthday a national holiday. And so Flag Day, which honors the flag of all Americans, native-born and alien-born, is due to an adopted son of America whose love of the flag was passionate and deep-seated.

USE J.W.V. BOYCOTT STAMPS
ON YOUR CORRESPONDENCE

Post Names

In reading proof on the page of the Jewish Veteran listing our posts, the editor was struck by the fact that so many of the posts are identified merely by numbers of the cities in which they are located. War veterans are supposed to be sentimental but the absence of sentimentality in the names of some of our posts is striking proof that we are far from it. We would like to see posts now known by numbers adopt more meaningful names. Why shouldn't we have posts named for great Jewish patriots? There ought to be a Uriah P. Levy Post, a Benjamin Nones Post, a Haym Salomon Post, a David de Leon Post, a Henry Castro Post and many others named after the legion of Jewish heroes and patriots? Chapters of the Ladies Auxiliary ought to commemorate such names as Emma Lazarus, Rebecca Gratz, Ernestine Rose, Leah Davidson and Rebecca Franks.

There are quite a few posts that have been named for comrades who died in the World War. But there are many more posts whose names are undistinguished and lacking in originality. There are no difficulties in the way of a campaign for more distinctive post names. We are ready to provide a list of suitable names, names which will be in keeping with the traditions and ideals of our organization. Comrades ought to look around and see the sort of names borne by posts of the G. A. R., the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The time is ripe for a wave of name-changing among J. W. V. posts, changes that will do honor to us and to those whose names the posts adopt.

The Constitution's Birthday

On September 17th the nation will begin the celebration of the sesquicentennial of the Federal Constitution. It behooves J. W. V. to make plans now for a suitable observance of this important occasion. The Constitution is our charter of liberties, and not just a yellowed document to be interpreted by judges and lawyers.

It might be an excellent idea if the Sons of the J. W. V. sponsored a nation-wide essay contest on the significance and import of the Constitution. Such a contest would be both timely and instructive and would be in keeping with the purposes for which the Sons of the J. W. V. was organized. It would also be well if one session or part of a session of our forthcoming national encampment were set aside for a Constitution Day celebration. The individual posts certainly ought to participate in local observances of the Constitution's birthday.

Let us not forget the Constitution. Together with the flag and the Declaration of Independence it forms the trinity of America.

THE JEWISH VETERAN

FATHER OF FLAG DAY

The Immigrant Jew Who Started It

By PAUL SEELY

That it was Ben Altheimer, a naturalized Jew and honorary member of the Jewish War Veterans, who initiated the annual observance of Flag Day is revealed in this timely article.

THE EDITOR.

The three most cherished treasures of the American people are the Declaration of Independence, the Federal Constitution and the Stars and Stripes. The anniversary of the signing of the Declaration is our greatest national holiday. Constitution Day, September 17th, is not yet a legal holiday, although it is beginning to be more and more widely celebrated. Flag Day, June 14th, the anniversary of the adoption by the Continental Congress in 1777 of the Stars and Stripes as our national emblem, is even less widely observed. This year being the 160th anniversary of the Stars and Stripes, it is appropriate to tell the story of the man who more than any one else is responsible for the gradual popularization of June 14th as Flag Day.

That man is Ben Altheimer, an immigrant Jew and honorary member of the Jewish War Veterans. Altheimer was born in Darmstadt, Germany, on March 6, 1850. He came to the United States in 1868 and settled in Memphis, Tennessee, where he went into the cotton business. Six years later, when a yellow fever epidemic struck the South, he moved to St. Louis, where he established a successful banking and brokerage business. For forty years he was one of St. Louis' leading citizens. And it was there that Flag Day was born.

Some time before 1912 Altheimer was visiting in San Antonio, Texas, and he was invited to be present at the flag retreat ceremony at Fort Sam Houston. Tremendously impressed with the ceremony, Altheimer returned to St. Louis and began the movement which culminated in Flag Day. To a number of influential citizens he proposed that special exercises be held in churches, synagogues and Sunday schools on June 14th, 1912. With the cooperation of the city officials of St. Louis, the day was made a civic holiday. This was the first celebration of Flag Day in the United States.

The following year other cities emulated the example of St. Louis. In that city the children of Temple Israel Sabbath School were the invited guests of the children of the Sunday School of St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church and Altheimer was the principal speaker. A similar celebration was held in the Second Presbyterian Church of St. Louis. Soon Flag Day caught on. By 1916 it had become a national observance, spreading from state to state. In that year the governors of many states issued proclamations designating June 14th as Flag Day and calling upon the people to show their loyalty to the national emblem by displaying it on their homes, business premises and public buildings. Through the efforts of Senator Spencer of Missouri, who had been interested in Flag Day by Altheimer, President Woodrow Wilson issued a similar proclamation on May 30, 1916, calling on the people of the United States to celebrate Flag Day. Thus Flag Day became a national holiday. It is still not a legal holiday but Altheimer hopes to live to see the day when it will

choice have for their country than the high-minded patriotism which moved Ben Altheimer to take the lead in having June 14th set aside as a day to pay homage to the Stars and Stripes. He himself summed up the purpose of Flag Day when he said "our flag is the most sacred thing we have. It is not just a piece of cloth to be hauled up and down on occasions, but it stands for the highest attributes of peace, progress and humanity. We should all be thankful that we live under the protection of our government and the American Flag."

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Jews In Coronation

Corporal Clive Stanton of Australia, Corporal M. M. Ellenbogen of the List Battalion Rhodesia Regiment and Staff Sergeant I. H. Fisher of the List Hygiene Corps of the South African Medical Corps were among those selected to represent their countries in the military detachments sent to the coronation of King George VI. All three were in the parade that was reviewed by the King and received medals from him.

FOURTEEN REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE DISPLAY OF THE UNITED STATES FLAG

As men who fought under the American flag, we ought to be familiar with the regulations covering its use and display. To refresh our memories we present here 14 rules governing the display of the flag:

1—The flag should be displayed only from sunrise to sunset; it should be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously, and should never be allowed to touch the ground.

2—When the flag reaches a condition where it is no longer a fitting emblem for display it should not be thrown away or employed in any way disrespectful to the national colors but should be destroyed as a whole, preferably by burning.

3—When carried in a procession with another flag or flags, the American flag should always be on the marching right.

4—If displayed with any other flag against a wall or in the open, from crossed staffs, the American flag should be on the right, and its staff should be in front of the other flags.

5—Grouped and displaced from staffs with other flags, the flag of the United States should be in the center or at the highest point of the group.

6—When the flag of states or cities or pennants of societies are flown from the same halyard with the American flag, the national flag is always at the peak. When flown from adjacent staffs, the American flag should always be hoisted first. No flag or pennant should be placed above or to the right of the national colors.

7—When the flag is displayed in any manner other than by being flown from a staff, it should be displayed flat, indoors or

outdoors. When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right. The same rule applies when it is displayed from a window. The flag should never be draped or used as a decoration to replace bunting.

8—Displayed over the middle of the street, as between buildings, the flag should be suspended vertically with the union to the north on an east and west street and to the east on a north and south street.

9—When used on a speaker's platform the flag should be displayed above and behind the speaker, but never as a cover on the speaker's table or as a drape over the front of the platform. If flown from a staff on a platform it should be on the speaker's right.

10—When flown at half mast, the flag is first hoisted to the peak of the staff and then lowered to half staff.

11—When displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony or front of a building, the union should go clear to the head of the staff unless the flag is at half mast.

12—When the flag is displayed on the pulpit in a synagogue it should be flown from a staff placed on the rabbi's right as he faces the congregation. All other flags on the pulpit should be on his left.

13—When used to cover a casket the flag should be placed so that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into grave.

14—The flag should never be displayed with the union down except as a distress signal.