

## **Flag History Presentation**

### *Elks Annual Services, June 14<sup>th</sup> Commemorating the American Flag*

As printed "Rituals of Special Services" Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America  
Adopted July 14, 1925 revised July 1982, 2004, 2005 © by the BPOE of the USA

Heraldry is as old as the human race. The carrying of banners has been a custom among all people in all ages. These banners usually contain some concept of the life or government of those who fashion them.

The evolution of the American Flag marks the progression of the government of the American people.

From the founding of Jamestown in Virginia, in 1607 until 1775, the Flag of England was the Flag of the Peoples of America.

#### **[Enter the Pine Tree Flag]**

In 1775, **the Pine Flag** was adopted for all colonial vessels, and this was the banner carried by the continental forces in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

#### **[Enter the Snake Flag]**

The Southern colonies from 1776 to 1777 used **the Snake Flag**.

In the latter part of 1775 the Continental Congress appointed a committee to consider the question of a single Flag for the thirteen colonies. That committee recommended a design of thirteen alternate stripes of red and white, with an azure field in the upper corner bearing the red cross of St. George and the white cross of St. Andrew. John Paul Jones, the senior lieutenant of the flag ship "Alfred", hoisted this Flag to the masthead on December 3, 1775, and one month later it was raised over the headquarters of General Washington at Cambridge, Massachusetts, "In compliment as he wrote, "to the United Colonies."

#### **[Enter the Grand Union Flag]**

This Flag, called "The Continental Colors" and **The Grand Union,** was never carried in the field by the Continental land forces, but it was used by the navy as its exclusive ensign, and was the first American Flag to receive a salute of honor, a salute of eleven guns from the Fort of Orange in the Dutch West Indies.

In response to a general demand for a banner more representative of our country, the Congress on June 14, 1777, provided:

"That the Flag of the United States be thirteen stripes of alternating red and white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation."

#### **[Enter the Betsy Ross [13 Star Flag]**

It is generally believed that in May or June of 1776 a committee consisting of George Washington, Robert Morris and George Ross commissioned **Betsy Ross**, a Philadelphia Quakeress, to make a Flag from a rough design they left with her. It is said that she suggested that the stars should have five points, rather than six.

This starry banner was first flown at Fort Stanwix, called Fort Schuyler at that time, near the city of Rome, New York, on August 3, 1777, and was under fire three days later at the battle of Oriskany, August 6, 1777, during a British and Indian attack.

The first official salute to the Stars and Stripes was given on February 14, 1778, by France, on the French coast, when the "Ranger", under command of John Paul Jones, was saluted by the French fleet.

This Flag, the carried by the "Ranger", was made by the young women of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, from strips of their best-colored silk dresses and the white wedding gown of a recent bride.

It is said that this same "Ranger's" Flag was flown by Jones' ship, the "Bon Homme Richard" in its thrilling fight by moonlight, upon the high seas, with the British frigate "Serapis." When the "Serapis" struck her colors, the immortal fame of John Paul Jones was insured as the intrepid defender of the youthful republic.

**[Enter the 15 Star Flag]**

The original thirteen Stars and Stripes represented the original thirteen colonies. In 1795 two additional Stars and Stripes was added to represent admission to the Union of Vermont and Kentucky. Under this banner of **fifteen Stars** and Stripes was fought the War of 1812. It was sight of it flying over Fort McHenry, on September 14, 1814, that inspired Francis Scott Key to write what was to become our national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner."

Miss Margaret Young, who cut the stars for that particular banner, subsequently became the mother of Henry Sanderson, the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Order of Elks in 1884.

**[Enter the 20 Star Flag]**

The Congress on April 14, 1818, adopted a resolution that on and after July 4, 1818, the number of stripes should be thirteen and that the blue field should carry **one star for each of the twenty states** in the union and that a new star should be added for each state thereafter admitted.

**[Enter the 48 Star Flag]**

Since 1918, there has been no change in the Flag design except that twenty-eight new stars were added before July 4, 1912, and **this Flag of forty-eight stars** flew over this nation for forty-seven years until just before the Vietnam War.

**[Enter the 50 Star Flag]**

On July 4, 1959, a star was added for Alaska, our first non-connected state and a year later, Hawaii, our island state added a fiftieth star. **Our present Flag** ----- **fifty stars** and thirteen stripes.

**[Enter the MIA POW Flag]**

"It is accompanied by the POW-MIA Flag to recognize the plight and demise of a special group of our Armed Services, those who were Prisoners of War and still remain Missing In Action."

"And who among us will ever forget the sight of firefighters raising our Flag over the ruins of the World Trade Center, the military personnel draping our Flag on the side of the Pentagon, or the citizens of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, placing our Flag near the site where brave Americans died fighting the hijackers of Flight No. 93? No other symbol could have offered such comfort as we still, today, endure the horrors of that day.

"Today, American Armored Forces carry our Flag in the villages of Iraq, the mountains of Afghanistan and the jungles of the Philippines and wherever terrorism may reside. Their struggle against the sponsors of terrorism is the hardest battle yet, and this threat to our Nation, and to our way of life, is certainly as great a challenge as our Flag has ever seen.

"The resurgence of patriotism since September 11, 2001, has rekindled respect for our Flag. Today, we see the Star Spangled Banner and wherever we turn, on homes, businesses, automobiles and billboards. Such displays stimulate our love for our Nation and for what it stands; they remind us of the sacrifices being made by the men and women of our Armed Forces around the world; and, they are a tribute to the heroes of the Police and Fire Departments the Nation over.



**JUNE 14<sup>th</sup>**