

## What is Flag Day?

When the American Revolution broke out in 1775, the colonists weren't fighting united under a single flag. Instead, most regiments participating in the war for independence against the British fought under their own flags.

In June of 1775, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia to create the Continental Army—a unified colonial fighting force—with the hopes of a more organized battle against its colonial oppressors. This led to the creation of what was, essentially, the first “American” flag, the Continental Colors. For some, this flag, which was comprised of 13 red and white alternating stripes and a Union Jack in the corner, was too similar to that of the British. George Washington soon realized that flying a flag that was even remotely close to the British flag was not a great confidence-builder for the revolutionary effort, so he turned his efforts towards creating a new symbol of freedom for the soon-to-be fledgling nation.

On June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress took a break from writing the Articles of Confederation and passed a resolution stating that “the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white,” and that “the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.”

It is widely believed that Betsy Ross, who assisted the Revolutionary War effort by repairing uniforms and sewing tents, made the first American flag. However, there is no historical evidence that she contributed to Old Glory's creation. It was not until her grandson William Canby held an 1870 press conference to recount the story that the American public learned of her possible role. It has since been confirmed that Francis Hopkinson, a delegate from New Jersey who signed the Declaration of Independence, designed the American flag.

Bernard Cigrand, a small-town Wisconsin teacher, originated the idea for an annual flag day, to be celebrated across the country every June 14, in 1885. That year, he led his school in the first formal observance of the holiday. Cigrand, who later changed careers and practiced dentistry in Illinois, continued to promote his concept and advocate respect for the flag throughout his life. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson marked the 1777 anniversary by officially establishing June 14 as Flag Day.

In the 1950s, when it seemed certain that Alaska would be admitted to the Union, designers began retooling the American flag to add a 49th star to the existing 48. Meanwhile, a 17-year-old Ohio student named Bob Heft borrowed his mother's sewing machine, disassembled his family's 48-star flag and stitched on 50 stars in a proportional pattern. He handed in his creation to his history teacher for a class project, explaining that he expected Hawaii would soon achieve statehood as well.

Heft also sent the flag to his congressman, Walter Moeller, who presented it to President Eisenhower after both new states joined the Union. Eisenhower selected Heft's design, and on July 4, 1960, the president and the high school student stood together as the 50-star flag was raised for the first time. Heft's teacher promptly changed his grade from a B- to an A.

### **Celebrating Flag Day:**

There are numerous ways to celebrate this event throughout the community.

The following are just a few suggestions of events and basic steps for organizing your local events. The key is to be creative. Types of events:

- Parades
- Memorial Services
- Flag Events (lining the streets, Flag groves, etc.)
- Dinners & Luncheons – invitees, honorees, presenters
- Award ceremonies (military, first responders, civic leaders, outstanding citizens, etc.)
- The Moving Wall
- Stand Down for Homeless Veteran
- U.S. Flag Disposal ceremonies

If you see a torn, soiled or badly faded U.S. flag, suggest to the owners that it be disposed of respectfully. The Post can collect the flags and conduct this practice annually.

The flag should be folded in its customary manner.

It's important that the fire be sizable and of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the Flag.

Place the flag on the fire. Individuals present should come to attention, salute the flag (or place hand over heart), recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a brief period of silent reflection.

After the flag is completely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.

Please make sure you are conforming to local/state fire codes and ordinances.

NOTE: Some Posts have procured a retired mailbox from the local Post Office to collect old flags.