

# History of Our Flag

Because the early American settlers came from many different countries, religions, and backgrounds, they had very different ideas as to how our flag should look. This is why the flags before 1777 looked so different from each other and the flag we have now. Some used different colors and symbols; some were even different sizes and shapes. Many either flew England's flag or used symbols from that flag in their own design. Others used symbols from other countries or other flags that they liked. Many different designs were proposed and some even flew at one time or another.

Finally, on June 14, 1777, the new U.S. Congress adopted a resolution that described how our nation's flag should look. It was still very vague, but it did require the flag to consist of a total of 13 red and white stripes and to have 13 stars, forming a "new constellation", on a field of blue. This first flag was called Old Glory. It had 7 red stripes and 6 white ones and the white stars formed a circle in the center of the blue field. Because this resolution was passed on June 14, this became Flag Day, a time to celebrate our flag and what it represents to this country.

The reason 13 stars and stripes were used is because of the 13 original colonies that had now become states. When new states were formed, new stars and stripes were added to the flag. By 1812 the flag had 15 stars, arranged in rows, and 8 red and 7 white stripes (15 total). This is the flag that was flying over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 when Francis Scott Key wrote the Star Spangled Banner, a poem that later was put to music and became our national anthem. This is why this flag was called the Star Spangled Banner.

Realizing that adding a new stripe for every new state would soon become cumbersome and was simply not practical, we stopped this practice and went back to the original 13 stripes, representing the original 13 colonies from which our country was built. Now, we add a new star for each new state, bringing our current total to 50 stars, the last of which was added for Hawaii in 1960.