

*The*

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# AMERICAN FLAG

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ITS HISTORY  
AND CUSTOMS

*courtesy of*  
**Assemblyman  
Angelo  
Santabarbara**



[www.nyasembly.gov](http://www.nyasembly.gov)

## Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara

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Dear Friend,

The American flag has stood as a symbol of freedom and justice for more than 240 years. Through war and peace, the sight of the American flag has shown friend and foe alike that the spirit of democracy lives on.

No other symbol captures the power and glory of the land of opportunity like the American flag. It has flown as our national emblem in some form without interruption since 1777.

The American flag is a living piece of history and a source of pride and unity for all Americans. The Stars and Stripes embodies the very qualities that make our nation great: liberty, justice, freedom, patriotism and national purpose.

I have prepared this brochure to help you better understand the significance of the American flag and its customs. As always, if you have any questions, I'm here to help. Call me, send me an email or visit my website at anytime.



Sincerely,



**Angelo Santabarbara**  
Representing areas of Albany, Montgomery and Schenectady Counties

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# OUR AMERICAN FLAG

The origins of the Stars and Stripes are deeply ingrained in American folklore. It is widely believed that Betsy Ross made the first American flag. However, various towns in colonial America have claimed to be its birthplace.

We know that on June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress adopted the Stars and Stripes as the official flag of the United States of America.

The Declaration of Independence made this resolution necessary. Previously, each colony had its own flag, which they flew on colonial vessels. England considered these armed vessels pirate ships and hanged their crews if they were captured.

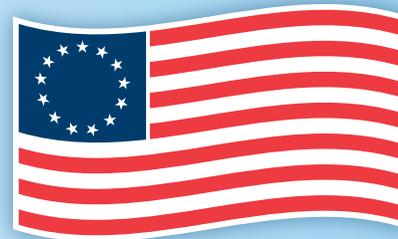
The American flag was designed to represent the new union of the

13 original states: It would have 13 stripes, alternating red and white, and 13 stars, white on a blue field.

One of the first flags had the stars arranged in a circle, based on the idea that all colonies were equal. The 13 stripes, resting side by side, symbolized the struggle for independence. The flag's color scheme also has symbolic meaning: red stands for valor, white signifies purity and blue represents loyalty.

In 1818, after a few design changes, Congress decided to retain the flag's original 13 stripes and add new stars to reflect each new state that entered the union.

Since then, Americans have fought for and died to preserve the ideals of democracy represented by the flag.



**The "Betsy Ross" Flag**  
In use June 14, 1777 – May 1, 1795



**The 15-Star, 15-Stripe "Star Spangled Banner" Flag**  
In use May 1, 1795 – July 3, 1818

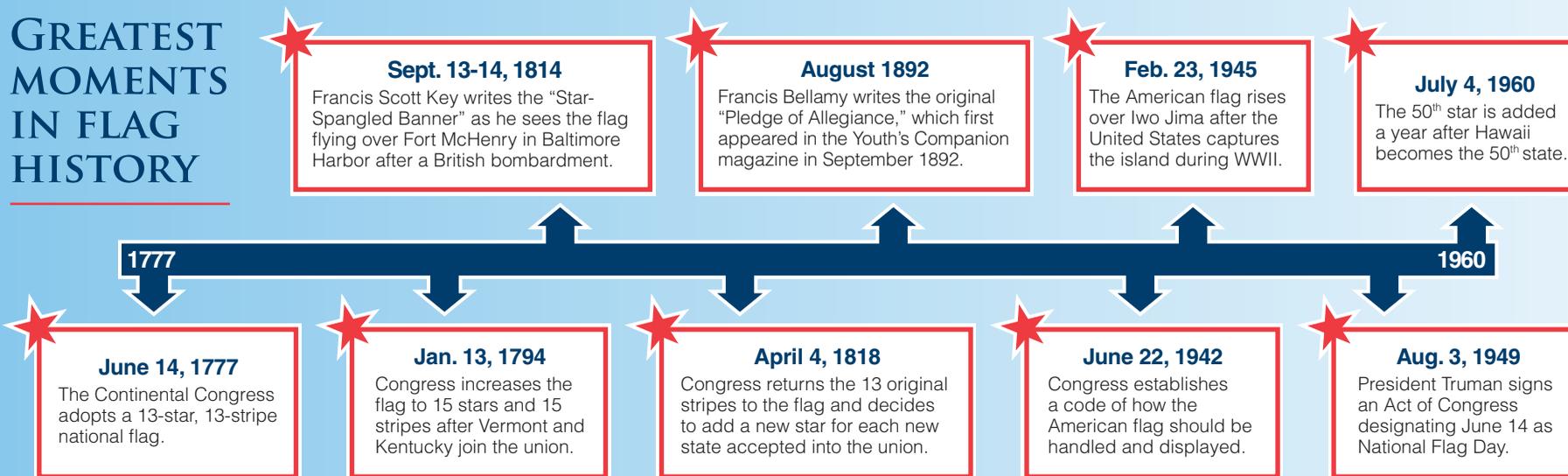


**The 48-Star Flag**  
In use July 4, 1912 – July 3, 1959



**The 50-Star Flag**  
In use July 4, 1960 – present

## GREATEST MOMENTS IN FLAG HISTORY



## CUSTOMS FOR DISPLAY

- ★ Display the flag from sunrise to sunset on buildings or flagstaffs and at night, only if properly lighted.
- ★ The flag should be raised and lowered by hand and never raised furled.
- ★ Always hoist the flag briskly and lower it ceremoniously.
- ★ The flag may be displayed on any day, but especially on national holidays.
- ★ On Memorial Day, display the flag at half-mast until noon only; then hoist it to the top of the staff.
- ★ When carried, the flag should be held aloft, never flat or horizontal.
- ★ Salute a flag when it passes by in a parade, during the Pledge of Allegiance or National Anthem and in a ceremony raising or lowering it.
- ★ The flag should never be allowed to touch the ground or floor, nor brush against any objects, nor be used as drapery of any sort.
- ★ The flag should never be displayed with the union down except as a signal of distress in instances of extreme danger.
- ★ When a flag is no longer in a condition to be displayed, it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.