

	<h1>BULLETIN</h1>			
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The Stars & Stripes!

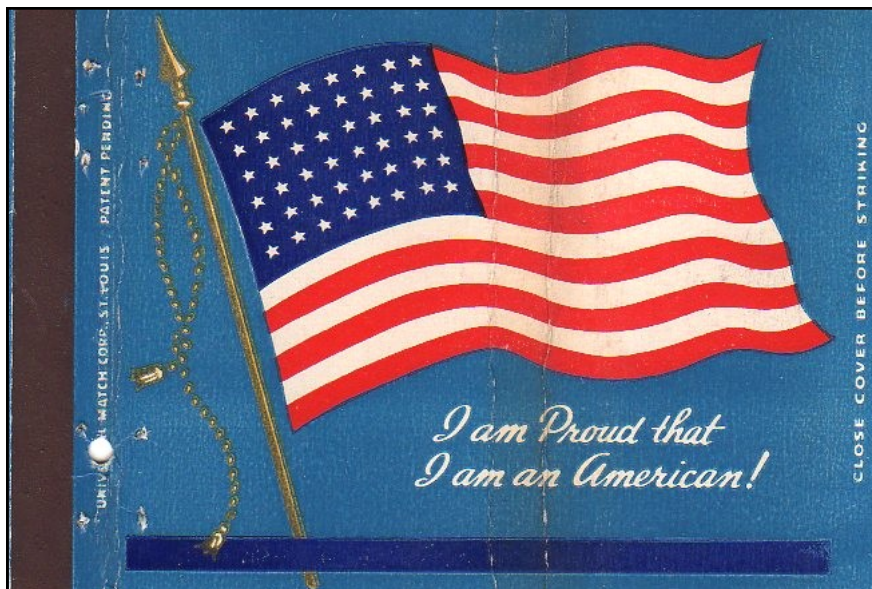
By
Mike Prero

[a much-requested reprisal of our earlier 2001 article]

Fourth of July! Fireworks! Parades! The Declaration of Independence!...the Stars and Stripes says all that and more, so what better time to look at Old Glory than here in our July issue?!

When the American colonists rose in armed protest against the British Government, the emblem they first adopted signified both their unity and the loyalty, which they still retained towards the Mother Country. Their Great Union Flag, also known as the Congress Flag and the Cambridge Flag, bore thirteen red and white stripes, but the contemporary British Union Flag formed its canton. This was similar to the flag of the East India Company, but whether it was deliberately adopted from this is unknown.

When, however, decided on a severance from their While retaining stripes in the fly, Union in the "thirteen stars field representing constellation". The arrangement of the American Flag is is reputed to have that one should precedence over



the Americans complete Britain, they to symbolize independence. the thirteen they replaced the canton by white on a blue a new exact stars in the first uncertain, but it been a circle so have no the other. As

new states were admitted to the Union, the number of Stars and Stripes was increased accordingly, and during the War of 1812, the flag displayed fifteen stars and fifteen stripes.

It was the sight of this "Star-Spangled Banner" still flying, after a night's bombardment, over fort McHenry "in the dawn's early light" which led Francis Scott Key to compose what became the National Anthem of the United States. The increase in the number of stripes threatened however to destroy the flag's effectiveness. So, in 1818, Congress decided to revert to the original thirteen stripes but to indicate the admission of a new state by displaying an additional white star in the canton. In fact, the flag of the United States has changed 26 times since the first official U.S. flag was approved by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777.

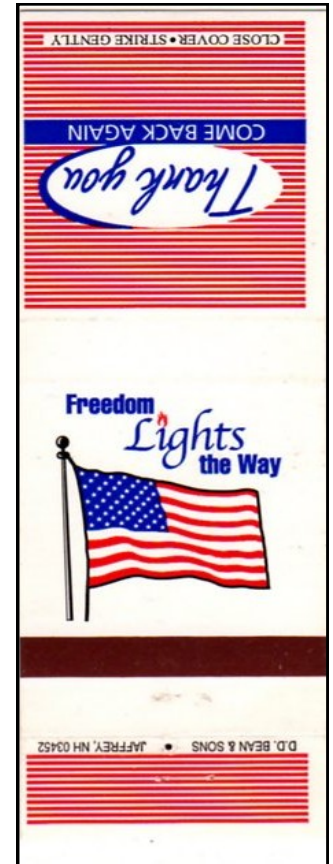
No one knows with absolute certainty who designed the first stars and stripes or who made it. Congressman Francis Hopkinson seems most likely to have designed it. Hopkinson was a popular patriot, a lawyer, a Congressman from New Jersey, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, poet, artist, and distinguished civil servant. He almost certainly was the person who designed the first Stars and Stripes. He was appointed to the Continental Navy Board on November 6, 1776. It was while serving on the Continental Navy Board that he turned his attention to designing the flag of the United States. The use of stars in that design is believed to have been the result of an experience in the war directly related to his propriety.

Even so, a few historians believe that Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress, made the first one. As the enormously popular legend goes, George Washington was a frequent visitor to the home of Mrs. Ross before receiving command of the army. She embroidered his shirt ruffles and did many other things for him. He knew her skill with a needle. Now the General of the Continental Army, George Washington appeared on Mrs. Ross's doorstep around the first of June, 1776, with two representatives of Congress, Colonel Ross and Robert Morris. They asked that she make a flag according to a rough drawing they carried with them. At Mrs. Ross's suggestion, Washington redrew the flag design in pencil in her back parlor to employ stars of five points instead of six. ("Her version" of the flag for the new republic was not used until six years later.)

The facts don't substantiate the legend, however. The story was first brought to light in 1870 by one of her grandsons, William J. Canby, at a meeting of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This took place 94 years after the event supposedly took place! Mr. Canby was a boy of eleven years when Mrs. Ross died in his home. There is **no** record of the flag being discussed or of a committee being appointed for the design of the flag in either the Journals of the Continental Congress or the diaries and writings of Washington around this time. Meetings with Colonel Ross and Robert Morris cannot be documented. Further, it is illogical to assume that Washington was present at the alleged meeting with Betsy Ross on the design of the flag when it is known that he wanted a national standard made for the use of the army in 1779.

The principal acts affecting the flag of the United States are the following:

- On June 14, 1777, in order to establish an official flag for the new nation, the Continental Congress passed the **first Flag Act**: "Resolved, That the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation."
- Act of January 13, 1794 - provided for 15 stripes and 15 stars after May 1795.



- Act of April 4, 1818 - provided for 13 stripes and one star for each state, to be added to the flag on the 4th of July following the admission of each new state, signed by President Monroe.
- Executive Order of President Taft dated June 24, 1912 - established proportions of the flag and provided for arrangement of the stars in six horizontal rows of eight each, a single point of each star to be upward.
- Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated January 3, 1959 - provided for the arrangement of the stars in seven rows of seven stars each, staggered horizontally and vertically.
- Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated August 21, 1959 - provided for the arrangement of the stars in nine rows of stars staggered horizontally and eleven rows of stars staggered vertically.

So, ready to start a U.S. Flag collection? Surprisingly, I have no one who has ever reported even having one! Yet, I can't believe there aren't collectors who collect in this area—it's such a natural: it's colorful, historical, nostalgic, and patriotic. Surely, at least, some veterans, fraternal members, etc. have such flag collections. Yes? No? Let's hear from you.

