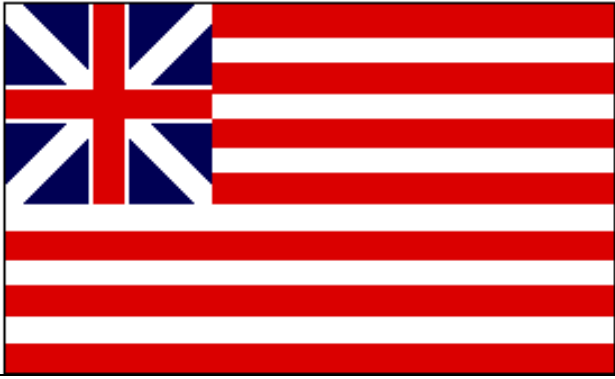


Evolution of the United States Flag

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, and few historians believe that [Betsy Ross](#), a Philadelphia seamstress, made the first one.

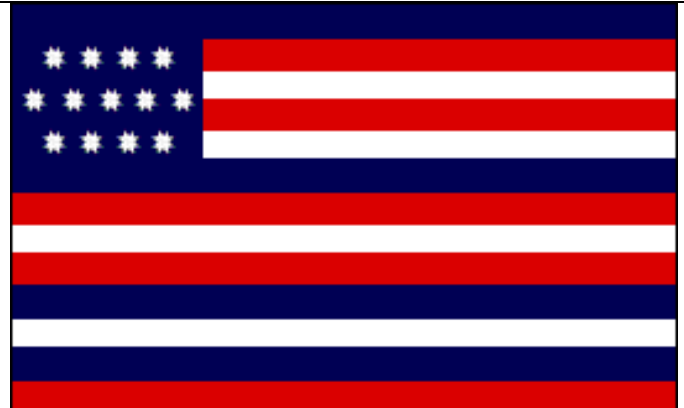
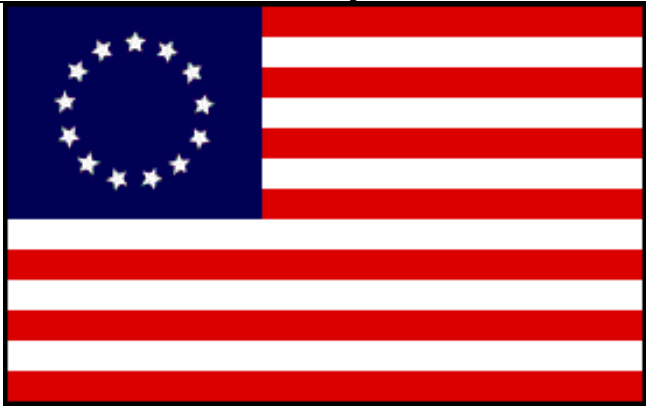
Until the Executive Order of June 24, 1912, neither the order of the stars nor the proportions of the flag was prescribed. Consequently, flags dating before this period sometimes show unusual arrangements of the stars and odd proportions, these features being left to the discretion of the flag maker. In general, however, straight rows of stars and proportions similar to those later adopted officially were used. 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.



The Grand Union 1775: Also known as the Continental flag, it is the first true U.S. Flag. It combined the British King's Colours and the thirteen stripes signifying Colonial unity.

The First Official United States Flag: This **13-Star Flag** became the Official United States Flag on June 14th, 1777 and is the result of the congressional action that took place on that date.



The Betsy Ross Since there was no official flag during the first year of the United States, there were a great number of homespun flag designs. **This flag** is without question the most well known of those. There are many reasons why this flag is confused with the first official U.S. flag.

The Serapis Flag: Designed with 13 stripes alternating red, white and blue. This flag was raised by Captain John Paul Jones on the British frigate *Serapis* during the most famous Revolutionary naval battle. On September 23, 1779, Jones engaged the British frigate *Serapis* in the North Sea, daringly sailing in close, lashing his vessel to the British ship, and fighting the battle at point-blank range. During the fight two of his cannons burst, and the British captain asked Jones if he was ready to surrender. Replied Jones: "**Sir, I have not yet begun to fight.**" The American crew finally boarded the *Serapis* after the British had struck her colors, and from the deck of the *Serapis* they watched the *U.S.S. Bonhomme Richard* sink into the North Sea.