

**OUR FLAG IN  
VERSE AND PROSE**

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Our flag in verse and prose by Robert Haven Schauffler

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**ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER**

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THE BIRTHPLACE OF OUR FLAG  
The Betsy Ross Home in Arch Street, Philadelphia

# OUR FLAG

IN VERSE AND PROSE

EDITED BY  
ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER



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## THE STARS AND STRIPES

National standards are as old as nations. In the day when a nation found itself, it raised an emblem of one kind or another as a symbol of unity and solidarity. These standards were carried into action and were displayed on occasions of state ceremonial. They bore significant designs or inscriptions of a civil, military or religious character. Out of these standards developed in time the flags of nations.

While this development extended through centuries, it is only within comparatively recent years that flags have come to be adopted and recognized as national emblems. Although America is one of the youngest nations, the Stars and Stripes is claimed by some to be the oldest National Flag in existence. Denmark disputes this claim, and dates its flag to the 13th century. Japan's flag, it is said, can be identified as far back as the 12th century. Without discussing that question, we may accept with confidence the statement that the American National Flag is certainly older than those of England and France, for the Stars and Stripes was adopted by Congress in 1777, while the tri-color became the Imperial Standard of France some time during the first and second empires, and England's Royal Standard was not adopted until 1801.

Before the War of the Revolution, the flags of the Colonies forming the United States were various, and in the early stages of the Revolution each state adopted a flag of its own. The Massachusetts flag bore a Pine Tree; South Carolina displayed a rattlesnake;

## 6 OUR FLAG IN VERSE AND PROSE

New York had a white flag with a Black Beaver; Rhode Island a white flag with a Blue Anchor. Even after the Declaration of Independence and the acceptance of the Stars and Stripes, a number of changes were made before the present arrangement was determined. The many flags brought into service when General Washington took command of the army made much confusion. This finally brought forth a flag of thirteen stripes, alternately red and white, with the crosses of the British flag on a blue ground in the upper canton—and this was hoisted, with a salute of thirteen guns, at Washington's headquarters in Cambridge on January 1, 1776. This flag was alluded to by the Tories as "The Thirteen Rebellious Stripes." So different were the symbols of the Colonies that Washington demanded that Congress should fix on some flag which all the Colonies could recognize.

Late in May of 1777, therefore, the American Congress, in session at Philadelphia, appointed a committee, consisting of General Washington, Robert Morris and Colonel Ross, to consider a report on a general standard for all the troops of the Colonies. In accordance with these instructions, the committee called on Betsy Ross, widow of John Ross, who kept an upholstery shop on Arch Street, Philadelphia, and asked her if she could make a flag after the design they showed her. She said she would try. She suggested changing the stars that Washington had drawn in English style, with six points, to the French style, with five points. Her suggestion was accepted and our flags always have the five-pointed stars.

It was Betsy Ross who made the first flag of the United States, and she made flags for the Government for several years. The first flag was made in