



Celebrate! Holidays In The U.S.A.

Flag Day

(June 14)

National flags are not merely symbols of a country. Their colors and designs convey past history and future goals. Flags have powerful connotations. They speak to the people and politicians. People of one country will burn the flag of another with whose politics they do not agree. To show their anger, students display their own nation's flags with the design altered or cut out completely. Dictators fly flags; dissidents rip them down. In every country of the world, the treatment of a flag displays an opinion or statement.

Americans take the treatment of their flag seriously and in the 20th century this has become an important issue. Included in the code of ethics are such rules as the national flag cannot be used for advertising. It cannot cover a monument or any ceilings. It must not be folded while being displayed. No one should write on an American flag. Ships can lower their flags slightly in greeting each other, but otherwise should not be dipped for any other object or person.

In the late 1960s, American students wore small flags sewn to the back of their jeans, symbolically insulting the American government and protesting its involvement in the Vietnam War. They burned the American flag in front of the Capitol Building in Washington as a statement of protest. In the early 1990s, senators suggested an amendment to the Constitution that would make this treatment of the flag illegal. The proposition was opposed because many others felt that this change would be a violation of Americans' constitutional rights to express their opinions freely.

For all the controversy it is interesting to point out that the United States did not even have a standardized flag until 1912! Called the "Stars and Stripes," or "Old Glory," the flag is one of the most complicated in the world. No other flag needs 64 pieces of fabric to make. The current flag has 13 red and white alternating stripes (representing the original 13 states) and 50 stars (each star represents one of the states of the Union) on a blue background.

The American flag has also changed designs more than any other flag in the world. The first flag, called the Grand Union, was first flown at the headquarters of the Continent Army on January 1, 1776. Betsy Ross, a seamstress, is said to have contributed to this design. She had an upholstery business which made flags for navy ships in Pennsylvania. A legend still persists that she showed George Washington how to make a five-pointed star and suggested thirteen stars in a circle for the first flag. Her descendants claimed that she offered the design. Actually, she and George Washington never met! George Washington did design the Grand Union but an often-quoted remark attributed to him might not be true:

We take the stars from heaven, the red from our mother country, separate it by white in stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her...

On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress proposed that the United States have a national flag instead of the British Union Jack. The 13 stars of the flag represented the 13 new states. There were few public ceremonies honoring the Stars and Stripes until 1877, when on, June 14, it was flown from every government building in honor of the centennial of the adoption of a national flag. Schools had unfurled American flags over their doors or outside the buildings long before this; but in 1890, North Dakota and New Jersey made a law that required their schools to fly the flag daily. The first official Flag Day was observed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1893. New York also proclaimed June 14 as Flag Day 1897. Other states were slow to follow. Some people thought that the day was too close to Memorial Day and Independence Day.

In August 1949, President Harry S. Truman proclaimed June 14* as Flag Day. Since then the President proclaims the commemoration yearly, and encourages all Americans in the country to display the Stars and Stripes outside their homes and businesses. Individual states determine how they will observe the day. In Pennsylvania and American Samoa it is a public holiday. Usually the flag is flown from all public buildings, speeches are made in public places and ceremonies take place in towns or cities

**In American Samoa Flag Day is celebrated on April 17th.*

Elementary school children across the nation make The Pledge of Allegiance in front of the flag every weekday morning:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

During the War of 1812 between the British and Americans, lawyer Francis Scott Key was escorting a prisoner to freedom by ship when he saw an American flag surviving a battle in Baltimore Harbor. The flag inspired him to write the poem which provides the words for the national anthem. The actual flag now hangs in the Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.. Today the "Star-Spangled Banner" is sung at large public gatherings such as sports events. Many television stations play the anthem before the station closes down for the night.

The Star-Spangled Banner

The National Anthem

Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our Flag was still there.
Oh, say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free, and home of the brave?

Moderately, with spirit

1. Oh, — say, can you see, by the dawn's ear - ly light, What so
proud - ly we hail'd at the twi - light's last gleam - ing? Whose broad stripes and bright
stars, thro' the per - il - ous fight, O'er the ram - parts we watch'd were so
gal - lant - ly stream - ing? And the rock - ets' red glare, the bombs burst - ing in

Chords: Bb, F, Gm, D, Gm, C7, F, F7, Bb, F, Bb, F, F7, Gm, D, Gm, C7, F, F7, Bb, F, Bb, F, F7, Cm7, Bb, F, Bb, F7

Dynamic markings: *f*, *mf*

air, Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.

Chords: B \flat , F, F7, B \flat , Gm, C7, F

Chorus
Oh, say, does that Star-Span-gled Ban-ner yet wave O'er the

Chords: B \flat , Cm7, B \flat , E \flat , G7, Cm, B \flat , F, F7

Tempo: *poco rit.*, *broaden*

land of the free and the home of the brave?

Chords: B \flat , C7, B \flat , F7, B \flat

Embassy of the United States of America